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TALOS THE MUMMY

TWO ACTRESSES TAKE A SHINING TO HORROR FILM.

By Alan Jones

"I can remember when I was a kid in Australia looking up at the poster in awe," recounts director Russell Mulcahy (*HIGHLANDER*, *RAZORBACk*). The poster promoted *THE MUMMY* (1969), the saga of a bandaged bogeyman produced by Hammer Studios, the British purveyor of Technicolor horrors. Nearly 40 years later, Mulcahy helmed, co-wrote and co-produced *TALOS*, THE MUMMY, \$10-million homage to his "favorite fantasy film, ever." The cast includes

Christopher Lee (who played the title role in the aforementioned Hammer movie), Jason Scott Lee, Lysette Anthony (*S.10*), Honor Blackman, Louise Lombard and Shelley Duvall.

Ms. Lombard, a familiar face in the British TV medium (*HOUSE OF ELIOTT*, *BODYGUARDS*, etc.), admits she's "not familiar with the horror genre at all and, when I read the script, I had no real yardstick to judge it by. Because I couldn't even begin to visualize the special effects, I concentrated



Louise Lombard models from *TALOS*. "I'm not familiar with horror films at all."

solely on the narrative and my first response to that was how strong the basic story was. I play the granddaughter of a famed archaeologist and while [Christopher Lee's character] doesn't believe there is a cult that follows Talos, or that supernatural events are occurring, I'm not so sure. I walked into a Funland on this film and it's an amazing learning experience for me."

Ms. Duvall, who has tackled a variance of genre roles (e.g. *THE SHINING*), portrays Edith Butros, a medium who clairvoyantly drops clues that converge in the shattering finale. The actress, who moonlighted as producer of *FAIRY TALE THEATRE*, has tried to collaborate with Mulcahy since the mid-80s. "I wanted Russell to direct a rock 'n' roll version of *Mother Goose*, but

neither of us got it together in the end. I've always loved him as a person and when you consider any project, you consider more than just the script."

"I love horror—my parents would take me to the Saturday matinees—and I really took a shine to the Edith role when I read it. Russell has been a dream to work with, too. How he manages to have the stamina, the patience and the humor through it all, I'll never know. To act in horror, you have to perform it as seriously as you can and we are all being as fearless as possible in *TALOS* under Russell's expert guidance. Plus, I'm thrilled to be working in Luxembourg. The Carousel Picture Company faculty here is brilliant. I wish I'd had this set up on *FAIRY TALE THEATRE*."

Cast as a medium, genius vet Shelley Duvall (*TIME BANDITS*, *POPEYE*, *BEST McCLOUD*) observes mummy wrappings turning into a swarm of birds.



ATTRACTI~~ON~~ F A T A L E

By LAURA SCHIFF

•Swedish actress Lena Olin, who earned a Golden Globe nomination for *THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING*, and played a fetchingly femme fatale in *ROMEO IS BLEEDING*, will co-star in Roman Polanski's horror movie, *THE NINTH GATE*. Reportedly written in the same dark vein as the director's '68 classic, *Rosemary's Baby*, Polanski's latest production will also feature Frank Langella (*DRACULA*, '79) and Johnny Depp. The story is about a collector of old men books who hires a private dick (Depp) to find a tome that has an inclination for summoning the Devil. (A bit of trivia: Olin is married to Lars Hellström, who directed Johnny Depp in *WHAT'S EATING GILBERT GRAPKE*.) As we go to press, *THE NINTH GATE* is filming in Paris; a 1999 release is likely.

•Writer-producer Joss Whedon is currently developing a *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* feature film based on the TV series, which itself was adapted from the 1992 Whedon-written movie of the same name. Actress Sarah Michelle Gellar is expected to star. In addition, Whedon will script an animated made-for-television-length film for Fox based on the legend of Dracula. He will reportedly produce and write songs for the film as well.

•Shannen Doherty returns to television this September to star as a good witch in Aaron Spelling's *CHARMED*. Described as "the teen-tv-something *THE CRAFT*," the show will air on Wednesdays at 8pm on the WB network.

•HOLLYWEIRD continues to live up to its name. Last month, I announced that the new TV series, produced by Wes Craven and Shean Cassidy, had been picked up by Fox despite the fact that the pilot episode was being "retooled." Rumors have been recently confirmed that the pilot's cast—including Melissa George (*DARK CITY*) and Booth Edman (husband of *DAHARA & GREGORY* Jensen)—will have to re-audition for the series. Also, HOLLYWEIRD is changing its environmental focus: It was formerly about a couple of Midwesterners who arrive in Tinseltown to shoot a weekly public access show that's embedded in the paratheatrical; now the premise has been switched to struggling LA artists. With Craven at the helm, I'm guessing that there will still be a decent amount of supernatural de-viance in HOLLYWEIRD, but at this



Last time we talked to actress Tilly, she shared an on-screen-kissie with Gina Gershon. Now, she's the BRIDE OF CHUCKY she should have stuck with Gina.

point, anything's possible.

•Add Oliver Stone to the list of directors rumored to be linked with *AMERICAN PSYCHO*, which Leonardo DiCaprio is "attached" to star in, but not "committed to." You still win me? Based on the novel by Bret Easton Ellis, the film about a Yuppie serial killer was originally set to be helmed by Mary Harron (*I SHOT ANDY WARHOL*), who also co-wrote the screenplay with actress Courteney Cox (*DIRTY FISH*). When it was announced that DiCaprio would play the lead, Harron was fired. Following the tentative film's condemnation by the National Organization For Women, DiCaprio's people equivocated, saying the *TITANIC* actor was "attached" to the project, but not "committed" to star. Guy Van Sant, Curtis Hanson (*L.A. CONFIDENTIAL*) and the aforementioned PLUTONIAN director are rumored to be on a list.

of substitutes to him for Hieron Stone's take on the material is said to be much darker than the original adaptation, which was a dark comedy.

•Oscar nominee Jennifer Tilly ('94) portrays THE BRIDE OF CHUCKY in the fourth installment of the CHILD'S PLAY franchise. And, yes, Brad Dourif channels Chuck in a another reprisal of his very vocal role. Directed by Ronny Yu (*WARRIOR'S OF VIRTUE*), the supporting cast includes Katherine Helg (BUG BUSTER), John Ritter and Alana Arquette (*THE WEDDING SINGER*). As the "former love of Chucky's human life," Tilly rescues the toy's begged remains from a police lock-up. She stretches the ragged appendages into a fetal living doll. That's right: Chucky promptly murders his moll and Tilly's soul is transplanted into a bridal doll if it's a pint-sized, feminin-

dal harlot*. The couple launch a Route 66 murder spree with their insatiable hosts, two sloping high school grads. Film concludes in a graveyard where Chucky and his bestie try to intact human bodies. Kevin Yagher (*NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2, 3, 4*) developed the puppet. The film should debut sometime around Halloween.

•Recently enjoyed a viewing of Arban Home Entertainment's *THE NIGHT CALLER*, starring Shanna Reed (*MAJOR DAD*) as a radio psychologist and Tracy Nelson (*SQUARE PEGS*) as the psychotic fan who terrorizes her. Think *"THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE"*'S SINGLE WHITE FEMALE* and you get the basic gist of all the plot. While the film plays more like a well-done movie-of-the-week than something released theatrically, I found this psychological thriller to be gloriously disturbing and suspenseful. Both leading ladies turned in heartfelt performances. Kudos to writers Mark Bomback and Frank Rehwoldt and director Rob Minkoff. *THE NIGHT CALLER* will be available on home video by the time you read this.

•Sci-Fi alien Athens Massay ([4 & 5]) is en route to Las Vegas, where she'll film a greatest hits in a CD-ROM interactive game, *COMMAND & CONQUER*. "They shoot it just like they would a regular movie," explains Massay, "except that we film many different versions of each scene. The game player might win a fight, or they could lose for every decision they could make, we film a possible outcome. My character is powerful and mysterious. They're killing me in a car, with weapons, a la *EATERS*!" It's likely the Virgin/Parmount production will be released in late '99.

•Congratulations to actress/FP centerfold Shauna O'Brien ('93) and husband, Chris Wood. The couple are expecting their first child any moment now. "I'm going to be nursing for a while, but I'll be returning to my acting career by the first of the year, at the very least," says the mom-to-be. O'Brien filmed two features during her pregnancy, both of which will debut direct-to-video. She envisions her role as a psycho sister, who terrorizes a young couple responsible for her sibling's suicide, in *ESCORCH*. O'Brien also stars in American Film Partners' *VOYEUR*, in which she plays a senator's daughter who may or may not be blackmailing her powerful father. Check out the sensuous Shauna's



Wicked City model Lisa Densin (top), who replaced Shanna, Queen of the Jungle (left) as London Night, makes her professional movie debut in CARNEVALE, the story of 6 warped variants.



web site (www.wow97.com) or send your greeting to: 802A Santa Monica Blvd., Suite #561, Los Angeles, CA 90089.

• David Nester, pin-up artist and originator of Wicked City Studio, garnered notoriety with his *Blonde & Gagged* renderings, which depicted gorgeous models tethered with tape. Dropping the lecherous tableau, Nester is developing a campy series of faux movie posters that pay homage to American B-movies. "My art combines the best elements of kitsch, Americana and pop culture from the 1950s," says Nester. Each poster consists of a classic pin-up image, set against a backdrop that evokes a specific genre: "bad girl" programmers, women-in-prison quackies, sci-fi, horror. Says Nester,

"The posters will also include the more laughable parts of American culture, such as trailer parks and lawn ornaments. I poke fun at everything." For more information on Nester's prints, posters and trading card sets, Wicked City Studio, PO Box 42206, Pittsburgh, PA 15203.

• Lisa DeVos, a blonde/gagged model who posed for Nester as Shanna, Queen of the Jungle (London Night Comics), recently made her film debut in *CARNELLA* (more about that film later).

• Stacy E. Walker, the "Female Peacock" frequently poses for classic tammie illustrators Belo Vallejo and Julie Bell; the resultant artwork has surfaced on the front covers of Heavy Metal magazine. The gorgeous model has joined forces with the Hildebrandt brothers (Tim and Greg), the artists who have been allied with STAR WARS, DC Comics and The Hobbit. It seems Walker has been cast as Cybonna, Superman's evil nemesis, in the Hildebrandts' new graphic novel "The Xena-Hercules explosion is only the beginning," says Walker. "Men and women alike long for romance and adventure. I know I do. My intention is to develop creative entertainment that people can enjoy at all levels." Be sure to sample her web site, www.staceywakar.com.

• Can't wait to see Jacqueline Lovell (S 7, #3 & #4) in KILLER EYE, a campy horror saga produced by Full Moon Entertainment. Lovell plays the wife of a scientist who invents an eye drop formula; its appliers are privy to a vision inside of a spiritual dimension. But an experiment goes awry, and a test subject drops dead. What happens next? "The test subject's eye-sentimental on page 88."

Paging: Stacy E. Walker embodies fantasy icons. Paging for genre-related illustrations (below), Walker-ups mutant Boris Vallejo—"move it beyond object into living."





ALICIA WITT

URBAN LEGEND

SHE'S INCENSED BY THE HORROR GENRE: SO WHY DID THE YOUTHFUL ACTRESS BAG A ROLE IN A "TEEN SCREAMER"?

BY PAUL WARDLE

As I enter her trailer, Alicia Witt is drying her hair for what must seem like the millionth time. Shooting on location in Toronto, she's wet during most of *URBAN LEGEND*'s production. Witt is the film's central character: a smart, sensible student at a New England college who vainly tries to convince cynical compatriots that the dead body count of fellow classmates should be ascribed to urban myth. With the script constantly calling for rain, Witt is perpetually soaked. She's got the green light to change clothes only in a few minutes between scenes.

Witt was seven when she made her film debut in *DUNE*. By the time she turned 14, the fledgling actress had been transplanted to Los Angeles, where her career was launched in earnest. "Most of the generic things I auditioned for, I never got," admits Witt. "I auditioned for guest spots on sitcoms, the girlfriend, the cheerleader-type stuff which I didn't get." She attended the ritualistic cattle calls, auditions where hundreds of kids compete for a

commercial. One time, Witt felt completely out of place at an audition for a car commercial "where they had all these beautiful women in little bikini outfits, and then I come walking in off the bus. I think, 'Okay, I might as well leave right now.'"

Things were tough for a teenager trying to get a break in Hollywood. "I played the piano in a restaurant to support myself, because I wasn't earning money in the beginning," she recalls. Later, after featured roles in *MR. HOLLAND'S OPUS* and the *CYBILL* sitcom, Witt gained a little clout and a lot more money. Graduating to a plum role in the \$14-million *URBAN LEGEND*, Witt breaches the horror genre for the first time in her professional experience. "It's a lot of work," she says, getting more wet and tallying more screen time. The cattle calls are way out of carrots.

A charming, sultry-voiced redhead, Alicia Witt imbues her film character, Natalie, with an all-American wholesomeness. Don't expect her to parlay success, fueled by her current project, into a string of horror films. Witt is nobody's scream queen; make no mistake about it.



PP introduced Ms. Witt (l.) as a cold-blooded killer in *Film*, a \$14,000 slasher about teen angst gone very. The producers, who cast Witt in her first starring role, discovered her at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. "She was playing the piano."

ALICIA WITT

"There's a lot of really creepy stuff in this movie! Fortunately, they're not showing a lot of blood and guts, which I'm happy about. It's like HALLOWEEN in that regard. A lot is implied."



URBAN LEGEND. At the annual "assassins party" (l), Witt plays a nice-as-nail
goth. Cost includes Rebecca Gayheart (EARTH 2) & John Neville (THE X-FILES)

"There's a lot of really creepy stuff in this movie! Fortunately, they're not showing a lot of blood and guts, which I'm happy about. It's sort of like HALLOWEEN in that regard. There's a lot implied and it's really scary and disturbing, but I think there's only going to be two scenes that are gross."

Witt, in fact, despises gratuitous violence—formerly annexed to the genre during its "slasher" epoch—as very unnecessary. "I think it's really bad for the culture. So many horrific things are happening every day in the world. Students are killing people without any feeling for it. I just think when you show all that blood and gore

and nobody reacts to it, it's implying—in a way—that it's okay to kill people. I don't like that."

Luckily, it's not all that realistic (*In URBAN LEGEND*). Obviously, if somebody were in the position that my character's in—watching all her friends get killed, one after the other and being present for them all—she'd be a bawling basket case in an asylum. She wouldn't be able to defend herself."

The actress can't rationalize the appeal of savage, disturbing movies and may decline the opportunity to screen her own performance. "I don't get it, myself," says Witt. "I hate horror movies. I have a very vivid imagination. I get so disturbed by even the mention of violence or blood that, to go see a horror movie and watch this happen in front of me, is not something I would enjoy."

As we continue to discuss this topic, I make a distinc-

tion between the illusion of death (i.e. movies), and something authentically horrifying like Nazi concentration camp footage. Witt, however, doesn't separate cosmetically applied carnage from real-life butchery; she regards all violence as bad. "I guess as long as people are watching it just to be entertained and to get a quick thrill—and know that they're safe in their seats, and not actually going through this—it's okay," she opines. "I just get really scared by the people who go one step further and think it's actually happening."

I ask her to describe the heroine that she portrays in *URBAN LEGEND*. "She's a very good girl: very efficient, very smart, very sweet—not naive, but very nice to everybody. She wants to believe the best about everyone." I point out that Natalie is the sort of gullible female who's routinely axed in the first reel. "So all my friends start to die," she continues, "and I



ALICIA WITT

"I don't get it. I hate horror movies. I have a vivid imagination. I get disturbed by even the mention of blood. To watch this happen in front of me is not something I enjoy."



Witt describes her URBAN LEGEND heroine as "a very smart girl, very sweet but not naive." She acknowledges that only "two scenes in the film are gory."

begin to connect the fact that they're dying in the style of various urban legends. I'm trying to tell this to everyone around me and nobody believes me. They all think I'm nuts! That's my motivation through the whole movie. I'm sort of fighting everybody. In some cases, other students don't even know that their class-

A 7-year-old Witt made her film debut in *Alice Doesn't Want to Dance* (96). She played "Alice" in the sci-fi movie

mates have been killed. They think it's something else, like maybe they've just gone away. And I'm saying, 'Not I was there! You don't get it!'

I query if Witt could identify with Natalie. Did she draw something from her personal experience to embellish the student's personality? "Fortunately," she responds, "I've never experienced any terrible deaths. But I'm sure that if I had, this whole experience would've disturbed me a whole lot more. I do know that every time I see the actors when they're supposed to be dead, I'll ask the director not to let me see them before we actually shoot—because it disturbs me so much. Even knowing that it's fake, just the mere suggestion of it really makes me feel sick. I hate to see people hurt. It's just so sad." She shrugs and laughs nervously.

The role, emotionally

taking, also leans on Witt's athleticism. "I'm doing a lot of running, a lot of climbing and fighting," the 23-year-old Witt relates. Was she obligated to train in some capacity? "I work out quite a lot. I make sure I go to the gym every day, and I run four miles just to keep in shape. I've been going to a trainer for about a year now. You get to exercise every little body part because they know exactly what weight loss work, what part of back muscles you'd never notice yourself, or that little piece of muscle under your arms. It makes a big difference in the whole overall picture."

Naturally, I'm curious about the artificial rain. Witt is under water more often than a Marineland exhibit. "I'm wet through a lot of the movie," Witt tells me, "basically because the writer decided to write 'It rains' in the script. Little did I realize that when you read 'It rains,' that translates to four weeks of being soaking wet in cold temperatures all night long. Natalie runs through the rain means, eight hours later, I'm soaking wet. My

jeans are falling down my hips because they're so heavy. My boots are puddles of water up to my ankles."

So I quip, "And some people think making movies is easy!" and Witt promptly counters with, "Not this movie! I'm working, I think, 48 out of 50 days on set." Principal photography on *URBAN LEGEND* was launched last April and wrapped in late June, cutting it pretty close for a film that's scheduled to debut this month. As a precaution, a second crew is concurrently shooting additional scenes on another location.

The cast is bonded by a youthful synergy. Though the actors are professionals on the set, the atmosphere is pretty easygoing. Witt doesn't have much time for socializing. While others get a few days off and long breaks on shooting days, Witt is shuttled from one set to another, bounced back and forth between the two crews as needed. Hopefully, all her hard work will be worth it—especially for a film that she may prohibit herself from watching. □

Witt & Rebecca Gayheart research *URBAN LEGEND*. Gayheart is a great pro, what with a *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN* sequel, *SCREAM II* and a *BLUESIES* spin-



THE MAKING OF URBAN LEGEND

BE FOREWARNED: THE FOLLOWING IS A TRUE BEHIND-THE-SCENES CHRONICLE ABOUT A WOMAN OUT FOR BLOOD.

BY PAUL WARDLE

Right from the start, *URBAN LEGEND* has been a project shrouded in mystery. Only the barest details of the plot are leaked to the press. It's likely that some students at a New England college won't graduate—they've been murdered and death is turning epidemic on campus. One of the pupils, Natalie (Alicia Witt), suspects a pattern of murders based on urban legends. And that's the end of the scenario; the balance of this whodunit's plot is guarded. Top secret. Cryptic remarks dropped by actors raise questions: are all of the demises "for real" or simply fabricated? Perhaps there's a prankster in the student body? And then there's some sticky business about the fate of Witt's character.

The film is virgin territory for its personnel: Jamie Blanks is debuting as director, and it's also the first film for screenwriter Sylvie Hoets and producer Gina Matthews. Thus far, everything is operating as smooth as silk. Scenes are being filmed within a library in downtown Toronto. The location has been con-



URBAN LEGEND: Director Jamie Blanks (center) Jared Leto & Michael Rosenbaum. Is it a horror film? Makeup artist Leslie Sebert describes it as a psychological thriller.

verted into a radio station with huge picture windows and enough flickering lights to fill a disco. Ms Matthews strolls into the lovely spring night, cognizant that *URBAN LEGEND* is already booked for a fall release—specifically, October 9th. "That's our hope date," she says. "We're on schedule. We're editing as we go. The dailies look great. Everybody's working to meet that date, and I think we'll do it!"

Jamie Blanks' meteoric rise from film student to Hollywood director has prompted his move to Los Angeles. He initially trav-

eled from his native Australia to the City of Angels to shop around his trailer for *I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER*. "I've been making films since I was eight years old," he recounts. "And I watch a lot of movies too, which helped a lot." A self-professed horror movie buff, he consumed the requisite literature (i.e. *Cinefantastique* and *Fangoria* magazines) and graduated to the industry as a genre aficionado. Like any stranger in a strange land, he occasionally lapses into homesickness, but feels no displacement living in Los

Angeles. Taking a break from *URBAN LEGEND*, he's one happy camper. "I've got an amazing crew and an amazing group of producers who have been behind me every step of the way. It's just the best thing that's ever happened to me. It's the greatest reason to be away from home."

"I was a little nervous the first day," he admitted. "We had a big day with a lot of extras, and I'd never even been on the set of a feature film until day one of my own shoot, so it was pretty spooky. But then, I settled right into it."

Especially indispensable to Blanks, indeed the entire production, is Leslie Sebert's craft. It wouldn't be a horror film without her. The numerous wounds, cuts and bruises inflicted upon victims are Sebert's handiwork. She's frequently in demand on the set, not only to touch up facial makeup, but to make sure the phony blood is visually compatible with the lighting and matches the previously shot scenes.

"What we did before we started the production, was a 'blood test', to test all the different types of fake bloods that are out there,"

Sebert explained.
So how many "types" are at her disposal?

"There's tons!" she replies. "We went through gallons and gallons of it. You can make your own, which is very simple. But most beauty supply companies have their own brand. They tested 13 different colors and 13 different types. For this particular lighting, because we're shooting at night, they wanted a lighter, brighter blood so that it would show up. In a day-



Leslie Sebert touch-ups Alice Wu on URBAN LEGEND set. L. Wu needs to move off of Sebert's handiwork. A blood-washed body makes a hending on her car.

time scene, we would use a different color. In one scene, where [a character has been dead for 24 hours], the blood is darker." Not surprisingly, though Halloween is her preferred holiday, demand for her talent sends Sebert into hiding ("It's too much like what I do at work").

Though her personal "blood recipe" is kept under wraps, Sebert reveals that movie plasma is usually a combination of food coloring, water, molasses and a variety of chemical additives. The "Cryolan" brand, a ready-made compound, proved practical for her purposes. "[Blood] is pretty well in every movie I've ever worked on," explains Sebert. Her past credits include some TV movies (*PERFECT WITNESS*), in addition to David Cronenberg's very controversial *CRASH*.

As originally written, *URBAN LEGEND* could have been a blood bath. Blanks, however, decreased Sebert's already hectic agenda by opting for off-screen homicides: only a few scenes

are overtly violent. The makeup artist peps the film as a psychological thriller, ("There's nothing scarier than your imagination," she points out).

Sebert's father was the catalyst for her vocation: "He was a director/cameraman and I used to go and watch him. I met a makeup artist when I was 12, and then I started training for [my career] when I was 14, taking private lessons. When you take these courses, learning from professional makeup artists, you don't just learn glamour. You also learn [how to do] ageing and bullet holes, everything I already knew from my father that wasn't all glamour—and thank God! Otherwise, I would be totally boring. I love doing this kind of stuff."

Other recent projects include *GOOD WILL HUNTING*: Sebert matched bruises on actors while shooting in different cities and out of sequence. "You progress the wounds, too," she notes, "because you see them fresh,

then you see them the next day and two weeks later, and you have to change the color. It's fun!"

To render the appearance of seamless continuity, Sebert acknowledges, "You have to work it out yourself. That's part of the paperwork, as the head of the department. And you work with the script person and do a breakdown yourself. You arrive in the morning and you see what scenes are to be shot and work it all out."

Her advice to those who are interested in applying makeup, for film-related projects, is to develop an apprenticeship, initially make it a labor of love. "I totally believe," Sebert cautions, "that they should do as much as they can. *Freddie* movies, theatre, whatever they can get their hands on—just to get that on-set or on-stage experience, especially if they want to get into special effects. Go out and buy a special effects book. There's a lot of good books out there.

You can start experimenting at home and on your friends and at Halloween.

"A lot of people complain about how expensive makeup courses are but once you start working, you get it back. You get paid well. The only way to do it is to start at the bottom. You cannot go on a set as a key makeup artist without experience. I had seven years experience on feature films before I became a key. It was probably more than I needed [laughs]. But when I became a key, I never screwed up because I've experienced it. You don't fake it. Be equipped and be ready. A big part of being a makeup artist on set is being last-minute quick—on this movie, big time!"

Her ready-for-anything theory was put to the test earlier in the shoot. "For one death we were shooting, in preproduction, they said there would be no cuts on the body. Then, three minutes before they were ready to shoot, they told me, 'We want a cut with blood running down.' And you've gotta do it. I just said, 'Okay' and I did it, and it looked great, and everybody loved it. If it's your first time on set and something like that happens, you're just going to freak out and have a heart attack."

One would think veteran technicians are equipped to contrive some impromptu carnage. Think again. "A lot of makeup artists don't have blood experience or special effects experience, and they go on a set and—in preproduction—they're asked for bruises and cuts and they have to say they don't know how to do it. They use the excuse that [it's a special effects person's job], but it's makeup actually."

This does not apply to prosthetics and rubber masks, but virtually everything up to that point. Sebert's inclination to erode over into special effects makeup has resulted in a perpetuity of work. Not too shabby for one of the very few females in the industry. □

TARA REID URBAN LEGEND

THE HORROR AND/OR SUSPENSE THRILLER IS STILL UNDER WRAPS. NO SECRET: REID MAY DETHRONE SHARON STONE.

BY PAUL WARDLE

The first time I saw Tara Reid was through a crack in a wall. Now, we're not talking voyeurism here; I was passing by a temporary, plasterboard structure, erected in a complex for URBAN LEGEND, a horror and/or suspense thriller from Phoenix Pictures. I suspect you've already read the past five pages, so let's briefly summarize: college students at a New England campus are bumped-off, and the whole massacre is tied-in with some sort of communal folklores. Nothing's really changed since page 11, there's almost as much covert maneuvering as a typical day at the Clinton White House—p.r. staffers are prohibited from revealing anything beyond the skridged scenario described above. Okay, so on with the show.

In addition to Tara Reid and Rebecca Gayheart, the ensemble includes Ms. Reid who, as the outlandish host of a call-in radio sex show, walks the walk and talks the talk. Those makeshift walls serve as enclosure for a broadcast booth set where Reid performs her broad-



Tara Reid as a (doomed?) doozy in URBAN LEGEND. The actress was literally strangled by her stalker ("It's just so exciting and such an adrenaline rush").

cast. Through the crack in the wall, only her hands are visible. Reid's fingers slide down the booth window as her hoarse screams finally fade. So what has precipitated her imperilment? Torture? Molestation? Murder? Does she survive? Nobody's talking. This silent treatment reminds me of the same behind-the-scenes tactics that prevailed on the set of SCREAM.

Later, as Reid sits in a chair next to me outside the booth—her voice raspy from screaming through several takes—she reveals that screaming has been a habit during the past week. Sometimes scenes, which require Reid to severely strain her vocal chords, have to be shot from different angles. That's a lot of screaming. Today, the bellowing is recorded for background. Alicia Witt's character is far below the overhead booth, supposedly watching and reacting to what appears to be the death of her friend, the doozy. Reid is photographed only in long shot for this afternoon's take, but she still has to scream audibly enough so Witt can hear her through the glass.

Early on, Reid honed her acting skills via a short

stint—as “Ashley, a runaway”—on the afternoon soap, *DAYS OF OUR LIVES*. Though the pace of soap operas is frenetic, Reid denies there were any repercussions: “You pretty much develop your character so that you know what’s going to come out of your mouth. You shoot on Monday through Friday, and you only get like two weeks off a year. It’s an hour show every day.” It was heat camp training. The disciplinarian regime afforded no latitude for improvisation: Reid had to stick to the script.

She returns to the breedcast booth. Every time director Jamie Blanks yells, “Cut!” it’s not because Reid flubbed a line or missed her mark. She patiently reenacts the same scene again and again, maintaining a high level of energy. Some members of the crew have christened her “One-Take Tara.” Good reason, too. When there are no problems with lighting or sound, Reid pulls off her performance in a single take. Often, the only reason for a retake is just insurance, where a last opportunity or even a slighted detail can cost a fortune if not caught in time.

When Reid finally recovers her voice, we traverse to a corner of the movie’s converted library. She’s still attired in her URBAN LEGEND signature threads: a low-cut, asymmetrical nightgown, high-leather boots with six-inch platform heels, spiked collar wristbands and a fur coat. It’s not easy, but I resist making eye contact with her striking cleavage.

“This movie’s been wonderful,” says Reid. “It’s easy to act when you’re around people who are such hard workers. You can just feel the energy.” And she reaffirms that a movie’s budget doesn’t impact performance. “I don’t think it matters,” she shrugs. “When you feel that the director and the crew and everyone else is on your side, you want to do better work. There are projects when you might not get along with everyone as

TARA REID

“Horror films? Some of it is so cheesy and over the top, that even if someone’s stabbed with an ice pick, it’s funny. Even when the acting & direction is good, face it: people like nasty stuff.”



URBAN LEGEND: Reid doogles into a Karmic States dream. “In most horror films, you don’t care about anybody. The characters in our film are well developed.”

well, and I think that’s when you tend to mess up. The pressure is on more in those situations.”

Born in Wyckoff, New Jersey, she sampled drama as a pre-adolescent but postponed any serious study until graduating from high school. Reid subsequently moved to L.A. and landed a gig on the aforementioned

soap opera. Though she circumvented the dilemmas that plague kiddie actors, the 22-year-old Reid considers herself a media veteran. “I think if you’re a child star, it’s hard,” she explains. “But if nobody knows who you are, you’re fine. If the public has the image of you as a child, it’s very hard to break out of that star-

type.” She believes her current age is showbiz certifiable because “[I can] play young women; not teenagers.”

Her beauty notwithstanding, Reid hasn’t been victimized by the casting couch syndrome. Vulnerable, she’s not: “The only way I think you have problems with that is if you let it happen. If you want to be a respected actor, you can’t play that game. I’ve never experienced anything like that. I think that kind of stuff happens on a lower level, if you’re going out on non-union stuff. Then you’re not really protected.”

URBAN LEGEND is not Reid’s first horror film. She made her genre debut, at age 14, in *RETURN TO SALEM’S LOT* (1987), co-starring with Michael Moriarty, Ronny Blakely and cult director Samuel Fuller. The film was helmed by Larry Cohen, whose eclectic output includes *THE STUFF*, *Q (THE WINGED SERPENT)*, *IT’S ALIVE* and a very underrated *SPECIAL EFFECTS*. What’s so appealing about URBAN LEGEND to prompt Reid’s horror-related encore? “The concept of this movie is brilliant,” she enthuses. “You don’t really know if an urban legend is true or not. Who it is, story, or was it real? As it gets passed around, the story changes. It’s my cousin’s brother’s aunt’s friend. It’s a really unique movie because there’s lots of suspense in it, and it’s not gory—and the characters in this movie are ones that you really care about. In most horror films, you don’t really care about anybody if someone dies off, people just say, ‘Oh, that was a really cool death,’ or something. The characters in this movie are all so unique and well developed.”

To be succinct, URBAN LEGEND is not a *FRIDAY THE 13TH* clone. “In this cast, there’s one of everybody,” says Reid. “Everyone can relate to that movie: young, old, fat, skinny. It doesn’t matter. Every kind of emotion is felt.”

Somewhere her character is stalked by the predator turned out to be a host ("It's so exciting and such an adrenaline rush!"). Reid, in fact, volunteered to perform her own stunts. In one scene, she hung-off a high railing and eventually took a dive. Harnesssed-in by four professional stunt persons, she insists her life was never in jeopardy; after all, the straps were meticulously checked and rechecked. "It's such a beautiful shot!" she recalls with pride. "It's the best shot in the whole movie, and I wanted to be a part of that. I wanted to really experience that emotion and feel what the character is feeling, and have the audience feel it, too. When you use stunt people, you have to do it in long shot or from the back. You can't really see the action like you can when you've got the real person doing it. Then the audience can really feel the tension."

I asked Reid to describe the obstacles that youthful actresses routinely encounter. Her reply is as old as Hollywood: "A lot of them face rejection. It's really hard to get that initial break or the role they really want. There's a big name game going on. [The studios] always want a big name star. That's the hardest thing. People can be such good actors but never get a break. My advice to young actors is to keep trying, because it can happen. If you are good at your craft, and really work hard for it, you may get a break. I am living proof of that." Indeed, Reid—seen earlier this year



URBAN LEGEND: Reid & her *Karma Sutra* dawdling partner (Michael Rosenbaum). "The concept of this movie is brilliant."

as "Bunny Lebowski" in Joel and Ethan Coen's *THE BIG LEBOWSKI*—was cast in no less than six films that are scheduled for 1998 release. Directed by Roger Kumble (*PROVOCATEUR*), she supports Reese Witherspoon (5:8) and Sarah Michelle Gellar (6:1 & 6:10) in *CRUEL INVENTIONS*, a modern adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* set in wealthy Connecticut. Reid is also featured in *(ED WOOD'S) I WOKE UP SCREAMING THE DAY I DIED*. The film has been eccentrically cast with the likes of Christina Ricci, Sandra Bernhard, Tippi Hedren, Eartha Kitt and Nimmiette Sheridan.

Though Taryn Reid obviously favors a script that's driven by character, she—

in sharp contrast to Alicia Witt—is not repulsed by the crop of horror films that morphed from slasher fare to Kevin Williamson's comedic *Grand Guignol*. "Some of it is so ridiculous that it's funny," Reid says. "It's just so cheesy and so over-the-top that even if someone's getting stabbed with an ice pick, the acting's so bad that it's funny. But even where the acting and direction are good, let's face it, people like to watch mean and nasty stuff. Sick thoughts. We all have them. Anyone who says they don't is lying. And these movies are your chance to see sick thoughts become a reality. It's okay. You won't get in trouble. So people like that. It's a chance for them to watch their imagination come to life, which is okay." □

Reid, 14, in *RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT* (17). Directed by Larry Cohen (*THE STUFF*), the film was about a vampire community that breeds cattle for blood. ("I must confess, I prefer human blood," says a vampire. "I have a drinking problem.")



A full-page photograph of Elvira, Mistress of the Dark. She is seated in a red velvet armchair, looking directly at the camera with a sultry expression. Her dark hair is styled in a voluminous bouffant, and she wears heavy makeup, including dark eyeshadow and red lips. She is dressed in a black, low-cut, sequined dress with a ruffled hem. Her right hand is raised near her face, and she wears a wide-brimmed, dark hat. The background is a rich, textured red.

Elvira

mistress of the dark

TASSELS, B-QUEENS, NUDITY,
3-D, 007 AND A SCARY MOVIE.

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI



Forget about Michael Myers. Here the real Shapes of Hollywood (photographed by David Goldfarb). Elvira's other ego, Cassandra Peterson, appeared in a Bond opie, DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER (?).



Raining the rock has
latest franchise is Elvira,
Nightmare
House. Far
left: "My bassist
featuring in ELVIRA,
MISTRESS OF THE
DARK. I hadn't done
it in many years, but
it's like riding a bike
once you learn, you
never really forget."

While Halloween is the eve of All Saints Day, the Christian feast of Hallowmas, its genesis is traced to the ancient Druids who believed that Saman, Lord of the Dead, called forth evil spirits on that night. The Druid priests stoked fires as a defense against those demons. Over the centuries, anyone foolhardy enough to claim that night as their own would risk vilification—*blasphemical*—and a fiery sentencing at the stake. But, on the cusp of a new millennium, we've finally acclimated ourselves to an age of enlightenment and technology (i.e. the electric chair has replaced stake burnings). Hence, this liberty has afforded Cassandra Peterson the opportunity to declare Halloween as alter ego's personal holiday: October 31st belongs to Elvira. Halloween is a multi-billion dollar business, second only to Christmas in retail sales: payday for Elvira/Peterson.

In the beginning (1981): A struggling actress, Peterson's day job required her to pound a typewriter. One day, her agent pitched an audition: it had something to do with hosting a regional TV show that was fueled on old horror movies. Peterson slipped into wig, plunging neckline and Valley Girl affection. Elvira, Mistress of the Dark was born. Not quite ready to retire from her secretarial work, Peterson continued to punch a time clock until someone recognized her as Elvira. It was the prelude to an invasion. Her office was later flooded by a gang of admiring construction workers. Peterson's boss subsequently encouraged her to vacate the premises.

Flash forward (1998): Today, Elvira is an industry—books, films, stage appearances, calendars and even a defunct brew. Fortunately, Peterson doesn't have to share Elvira's income with some multinational conglomerate; she owns the character 100%. During the past dozen years, she's earned additional

"I shot a movie in Rome. Cast as a gargoyle, I sat on the corner of a building with no clothes on. Nude scenes were easy to do because I had been a showgirl."



Exercising Elvira: "Comedy's something I've always been interested in," says Cassandra Peterson, who's comic notes include *CHEECH & CHONG'S NEXT MOVIE* p. 17, *High Encounters/Universe Kind*, and *PEE-wee's BIG ADVENTURE*.

annual revenue with her annual Halloween Haunt Show affiliated at Knott's Berry Farm (California). The revue includes Elvira's stand-up routine, comedy, in fact, has contributed to her longevity. Jiggle into a convention's Q&A panel, as her eyes sweep past her alpine cleavage, she abruptly declares, "I'll answer your first question right away.

Yes. They're real." During a five-year tenure, Peterson talibed some comedic experience with The Groundlings, a Los Angeles improvisational group. "I was working with people like Paul Reubens [Fee Wee Herman] and Phil Hartman and John Goodman," recalls Peterson. "So comedy was something that I've always been interested in, and some-

thing I wanted to do. Recently, I've been concentrating more on comedy which is one of the reasons that I originally got the job of Elvira. The director saw me at the Groundlings doing comedy. That separated me from the other girls who auditioned for the Elvira role. The other criterion seemed to be very large breasts. I qualified in that area too, but the comedy is what I think pushed him over the edge to hire me."

Humor has proven therapeutic. A pre-adolescent Peterson was an outcast, partially because of childhood injury. "I was kind of a loser-type kid," she relates, "and I made up for a lot of my shortcomings by joking about it. I had scars on my neck and my shoulders from an accident that I had when I was three years old. I was burned by a big kettle of boiling water, so, a lot of times, kids made fun of me. Kids are cruel that way. I used humor instead of crumpling and falling apart. I would say that I was always into comedy and later on, when I began acting, I felt most natural doing comedy parts. I'd have a hard time doing drama. Every time I would do a scene in



acting class that was serious, I would start laughing half way through it. So I wasn't very good at doing anything dramatic."

Nevertheless, Peterson pursued an acting career. She applied her experience as a showgirl to a minor role in the James Bond epic, *DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER* (1971). "I'm barely in it," Peterson shrugs. "I shot one

scene in Las Vegas when I was a showgirl there. They shot a show and it happened to be ours. Myself and another girl were in it, accompanying a comedian on stage. Later, I went to London and met up with the cast and crew again and was in another little scene. They were glorified extra roles but I had a great time, and I met Sean Connery and all the people who were in it. Michael Caine and Tony Curtis were all hanging out together at Pinewood Studios.

After strutting the Vegas stages for a couple of years, Peterson—who had fallen in love with Rome during a visit when she was 16—decided to get reacquainted with the Eternal City. She and a girlfriend cruised to Italy in 1972. While strolling down a Roman thoroughfare, they met a Vegas acquaintance who was serving as a student director on *Frederico Fellini's ROMA*. He introduced them to the Italian filmmaker, who asked the two showgirls if they'd like to appear in the film. "It was pretty bizarre," sighs Peterson.

Back in the States, she landed her first substantive screen role in 1973's *THE*

"Comedy is one of the reasons that I got the job of Elvira. That was the criterion that separated me from the other girls. The other criterion? Very large breasts."



"I talked to Roger Corman about an *ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK* script, but production is postponed. El Peterson as 'O'Malley's Girl' in *THE STING* P

WORKING GIRLS ("My best girlfriend, Lynne Guthrie, happened to be the lead character in the movie..."). Critic Leonard Maltin, who has gorged the film as "one of the better drive-in comedies," cites Peterson's "mifly strip-tease." But it wasn't her first fling with nudity...

While in Rome, Peterson was cast in an saga about Biblical bombshell, Salome:

"I did the movie with the model Veruschka. This other girl and I sat on the corner of this giant building as gypsies. We were crouched down and we were basically nude... well, semi-nude since some things were covered. We had to sit there all day long on the corner of this building like statues, mostly with no clothes on. It was easy for me to do nude

scenes all the time because I had been a showgirl for awhile, and all you wear is a G-string. Basically, that's what I wore in movies. Topless was no problem for me."

As a model, Peterson's charms were unveiled for men's magazines, including *Playboy* and *Omz*. "I never was a centerfold in *Playboy*," she explained, "because I had been nude in Ve-

gas, and you couldn't be a centerfold if you had already worked nude or semi-nude. That's why they never have showgirls in there as centerfolds, just features."

Her "proudest achievement" was nine months in production: baby daughter, Sadie. "Well she's not a baby anymore, she's getting to be a little girl. She's three years old," smiles Peterson. "It's been the greatest experience of my life and I'm glad I waited so long to have her. I had her when I was 43 years old. I didn't always want to have children. Actually, I always wanted not to have children. [Mark Peterson] and I had been married for 13 years and we decided it was a good idea, and I became almost obsessive with it. I didn't do any kind of medical intervention. I felt if it's not meant to be, then it's not meant to be—that's all."

Sadie has no problem separating her mom from Elvira; then again, that is a problem. "I hope she doesn't get weirded out about it," explains Peterson. "She calls me 'Mommy' and refers to Elvira as 'Mommy Elvira.' It became pretty clear to me the other day that she really thinks that 'Mommy Elvira' is another person. I said something about, 'Listen who's singing that song That's Mooshy singing that song.' But she said, 'No it's not. It's Mooshy Elvira.' And I'm all of a sudden thinking, 'Uh-oh! I'm two different people!'

The commercialization of Halloween activities has burgeoned across America. With a pause usually reserved for Christmas, the public is purchasing holiday icons—jack-o'-lanterns, skeletons, witches, the works—for festive home displays. Traditional haunted house commerce, including Spooky World and Terre on Church Street, are drawing big business. Last year, Madison Square Garden was converted into Madame Scare Garden for the season, and Long Island's Haunted Firehouse was a hot ticket. But who's a

more qualified Halloweener than you know who? "We're selling haunted house-like franchises," notes Peterson. "Elvira's *Nightmare Haunted House*. We have people we're involved with who have been in the haunted house business for many years, and are experts at doing haunted houses. So they'll do them with the involvement of Elvira. Last year, we started out with one which was our flagship in Atlanta and now it looks like by this October we'll have seven or eight more, including one in Houston. They're only open around Halloween, not year round. Some will open around September and go through October. That's almost as many as they're able to build, right now, at one time. They have built some new structures, but usually they'll rent a structure and then just dress it. But some people actually have structures built. We're now working on something which I can't talk about, but it will be open all year round."

Her supernatural amazement notwithstanding, Elvira hasn't decided how to be in two places at the same time (although she is working on it), nevertheless, the Mistress of the Dark will make personal appearances at each of her haunted houses. "I'm trying to coordinate it so I could get to all of them at a different time. We'd also do radio and television ads for it. Inside, there would be TV monitors of me welcoming people, telling them where to go. And there'd be recordings of Elvira's voice throughout and giving them a tour of the house."

The central story premise per house is that its celebrity occupant, Elvira, is trying to sell the joint. One member of the ensemble cast, a real estate woman who's trying to unload the property, offers customers a tour of the domicile. "My presence will be in mirrors and sculptures of Elvira," says Peterson. "There would be a little store at the end which would be heavily laden with Elvira



Though a bust at the box office, *ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK* did break box office on the video market (plus on *Elvira's* rental chart). The proposed sequel, *ELVIRA AND THE VAMPIRE WOMEN*, is "steel-beamed in back & coverage."

merchandise. The exterior would have casts of Elvira in the front of each haunted house." Not content with just a few haunted houses scattered around the country, Peterson and company are in serious negotiations for a permanent theme park in Orlando, Florida.

Wave Pictures, a purveyor of large format 16 mm perf/Tumann films in the Imax tradition, is a pundit in the pro-

duction of "ride simulation" films. A couple of years ago, the company cast Elvira in *TERHILL RIDE*, a 35-minute short directed by Ben Stassen (available from Columbia TriStar Home Video). The technology simulated the experience of riding the globe's most treacherous amusement park twisters and roller coasters; among the attractions was Elvira's own vehicle. "It's about how the

rides began and which are the biggest, the most famous," says Peterson. "Part of the movie was the filming of my thrill ride which is called *Superstition*. It's a motion control ride that's in amusement parks all over the world, and large malls like Mall of America in Minneapolis. It's a particular theater that they use for these rides, in which the seats are able to move

You're in front of a screen but the chairs actually move like Universal's *Back to the Future* ride. Part of *THRELL RIDE* was the making of my own motion control ride. They explained how they worked and how these are the latest thrill rides. It's the high tech version of roller coasters. It has wind blowing in your face and the seats move. It's not a ride for wimps, let me tell you. It's a pretty high speed motion control ride. It's definitely a ride for people who like roller coasters. You can get just as sick on motion control as on the real thing."

When Wave Pictures prepared their subsequent project, a chronicle of 3D films called *ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD DIMENSION*, they again appealed to the Mistress of the Dark. "This movie was difficult to make," reveals Peterson. "Slow and difficult. It's incredibly expensive to make a 3D movie in that giant format. Luckily, they called me and wanted me to be involved in it. In the movie, I do a music video in 3D. It's a music video of one of my songs, called *Hunted House*, from a CD that I have out from Rhine Records. Filming is different in a major way. First of all, I did

"Regarding horror flicks, my favorites femmes are Linnea Quigley and Bobbie Bresee: sexy and smart. Another one I love is Julie Strain: such an amazing model!"



Elvira's web site, recently redesigned, attracts 250,000 hits per month ("It's really cool!"). In Peterson's book on tap as "Woman with Legs" in STRANGER ACE (90).

everything with a green screen behind me because my eyes are blue and my eyes would be holes if they used a blue screen. Everything I did was just standing in front of nothing. Sometimes, I had to be suspended from a little cart up in the air and be in all these weird, strange positions. It was really bizarre making it. They only do tiny, little

scenes like one sentence long...that's all they can film! It was a very, very slow, grueling process, really bizarre cameras, a lot of tech people. The film is enormous because, when it's shown, it's projected on an Imax screen, which is, I believe, six stories high. I would say that the film stock itself is six inches across and is extremely expensive. They can't afford to

waste any. That's why it was very important that you don't do many takes. We shot in a local Hollywood studio."

She's also breached the print medium. Along with John Paragon, her writing partner, Peterson keeps the nation's libraries well stocked. Several years ago, Paragon and Peterson were drawn together by a mutual friend, a book agent who

proposed a compendium of Elvira books. Peterson conceded to attend a meeting that would plot the direction of the novels. Soon after, a deal was struck with Berkley Publishing. The third book in the *Elvira's Nightmares* series has recently debuted on store shelves. "It's like the *Goosebumps* series only for older kids," Peterson explains. "It involves a lot more humor along with the horror. The first one we did was *Transylvania 90210* about a bunch of vampires that move next door to Elvira." Peterson and Paragon split the workload, each writing an alternate chapter; they also edited each other's work. "It was harder than I thought," admits Peterson. "God, it's a lot of work writing a book. They're a blend of comedy and horror. We have a few things which teenagers will think are a little scary—but a lot of humor. Elvira is a character in each one, and it's about her adventures or her misadventures." (Sample book #2, *Camp Vamp: Elvira "roughs it" in the woods, dragging along three suitcases of makeup and hair spray, unfortunately, she neglected to pack food provisions.)*

The latest edition is titled *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf*, a spin on the fabled A gang backfires on Elvira's pal, a habitual practical jokester who thinks he's turning into a werewolf. "At first, Elvira doesn't believe a thing he says," Peterson wryly grins. "But then things happen that make it seem that there is something wrong with him. He keeps acting stranger and stranger. Elvira gets involved with him and a group of gypsies that's coming to town. She really believes he is not a werewolf and tries to clear his name, and discover who is the real werewolf."

While Elvira is credited as co-author of the series, Cassandra Peterson is identified as co-writer, with Paragon, of a picture book called *Bad Dog Andy*, published last December by General Publishing



"I lived in Europe long enough that I got used to going to beaches with no top on. It's very normal and natural, yes? I mean, over here, it's 'Oh my God, there's too much cleavage!'"

"Elvira's Nightmares is like the *Goosebumps* series, but for older kids. They involve more humor along the with the horror. Each is about Elvira's misadventures."

Group (the same unit that brought you the opulent *Playboy Book* and *Playboy Book*). Plot: When its master leaves the house, a Dalmatian indulges in the "good life"—it guzzles wine, smokes cigars and even manages to have a little quality time with the neighbor's poodle. "It's a parody of a book called *Good Doggo*," Peterson explains. "It's mostly illustrations. In fact, there are only two sentences in it. It's for adults, but it looks like a children's book. We hired Cathy Pavlin, a professor at an art college here in California, as the illustrator. She did brilliant illustrations. You think, 'Oh great! There are only two sentences in it,' but we were heavily involved. We planned every single action that the dog did, and

Peterson: "Women should be able to show whatever they feel like showing." R. Plotting "The Nightmare Haunted House" (AFTA convention).

then Cathy would draw the picture and we'd tweak it. And then she'd go back and make the changes. But it came out as a very cute book and is selling well."

The Elvira merchandising machine has been launched into cyberspace; her web site (www.Elvira.co) registers 250,000 hits a week. Not content to rest on her laurels, Peterson and company have been redesigning the site. "The new one is going to be so much better. It's really cool and has a lot of information about Elvira's past and future, with memorabilia and lots of photos. We have tons of various tie-ins to sell."

Not everything is gravy. Before she was globally acknowledged as an icon, Elvira's regional (California) celebrity was rooted in dropping bon mots between commercial breaks of horror films. But sometimes you can't go home again. Hosting last year's Halloween presentations of *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* and *FREDDY'S DEAD* on an L.A. television station, Elvira garnered huge ratings. So why can't Peterson persuade a network to develop a "movie hostess" slot for Elvira? "It used to be so easy," she explains, "because we could buy and syndicate these packages of movies. It no longer works that way, because these big packages of movies are owned by big studios. Now, it's really hard to get them. They're not for sale. So getting the movies is what has prevented us from doing another series like our *MOVIE MACABRE*. We've approached some of the cable companies about it but their budgets are sooooo low, it's al-





Elvira was cast in **THRILL RIDGE**, a very scary movie: "It's the high tech version of roller coasters. We set a ride for wimps, let me tell you. You won't get just as sick on motion control as on the real thing!"



"Women do not have
to be covered up be-
cause we don't.
See in the Middle
East. A woman's
silhouette is perfectly
severed and natural,
and I never thought
of it in a bad way."

most not worth all the work that goes into it. We'd like to do it again, but getting packages holds it up."

Knott's Berry Farm's Octofest remains one of Peterson's favorite projects. The theme park includes the Good Times Theatre which seats 1500. "I do four shows a night," says Peterson. And every one of them is a sell-out. "Last year I did 17 nights. They start out at the beginning of the month with a couple of shows, then it goes to three nights a week. Then it increases throughout the month as they get closer to Halloween. It's actually a hard job, especially when you don't do it all year." Backed by dancers, singers and a live band, Elvira belts out songs, does some hoofing, tells jokes. "It is a fun show. Last year, the dancers were also the back-up singers. They were brilliant. It's really very, very hip—and very cool, very cutting edge dancing."

"Of course, it has a horror theme. The last one was called Dead Legends of Hollywood so we had various dead rock stars in it like Elvis and Jim Morrison of The Doors, and a lot of other dead people performed in the show. It's almost like a Vegas revue, except for teenagers. You'd be amazed at what we got away with. It's pretty sophisticated. It's not for little kids, that's for darn sure."

Last year, she pushed the envelope as homage to Vegasburlesque, Elvira's act included her twirling tassels. "We performed YMCA, except it was all women," Peterson impishly grins. "I was the leather one, then there was an Indian chief, a construction worker, a policeman and a cowboy. It was all girls and we did our version of *Macho Man*. At the end, I twirled tassels like I did in my movie [ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK]. I was dressed, of course, but it was pretty sexy."

"I knew how to do that since I was 14 years old. I was a big girl when I was 14. I was a go-go dancer in

"I was a go-go dancer in a Colorado nightclub called Club A Go-Go. While some kids worked at how to play the piano, I was busy learning to twirl tassels."



Peterson describes matinée as "The greatest experience of my life... I waited so long to have a daughter". © 1990 WEITZ'S BIG ADVENTURE

a Colorado nightclub called Club A Go-Go. There was another dancer there whose name was Suzanne Summers—not the actress, she was a go-go girl. I have to explain that, in those days, go-go dancing was white boots and short dresses or bikinis with fringe on it. It wasn't what people think of as go-go girls today. It wasn't topless or anything.

Suzanne could twirl tassels on her bra and on her behind. I never learned the "behind" part, but she did teach me how to do the bra. I practiced all the time. So while some kids worked at how to play the piano, I was busy learning to twirl tassels. I can have them go in either direction, both together or separate. I used to be a lot better. When I

did ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK, I hadn't done it in many years. I thought I'd never be able to do it, but it's like riding a bike—once you learn, you never forget. I always have women begging me to teach them to do that. It's all a muscle control thing. I should do a seminar and give lessons. That will be the next thing I do: Elvira's video tape on how to twirl tassels. Actually...it is a funny idea."

So which actresses, invariably linked to biker films, would qualify as Peterson's favorites? "I love Bobbie Bresee (MAUSOLEUM) and Linnea Quigley (1:1, 4:1). They're friends, first of all, and I think they're great and really sexy for the whole genre—and they're very smart. They're not like blonde bimbos who you think would be involved with this. Anyone who gets into this and stays with it, for a lot of years, has to be very smart. They're both good at marketing themselves. Really intelligent and really talented. Another one who I love is Julie Strain. I don't know her but she's very tall. I think she's so great looking and so cool. I've just seen some amazing



photographs and drawings of her. She's such an amazing model. I've seen her at an art gallery. I look like a shrimp next to her. I'm 5'7" and, as Elvira with my hair and my heels on, I get way up there."

Unfortunately our time with Peterson has to be cut short. It's time for Mommy/Mommy Elvira to pick up Sadie at school. □

Sandra Bullock Practical Magic

THE SWEET N' SEXY ACTRESS RAPS ABOUT HOLLYWOOD VOODOO AND HER NEW ROLE AS A SCHIZOID SORCERESS.

BY MITCH PERSONS

The hits, the marginal business and the misses: SPEED/SPEED 2, WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING/TWO BY THE SEA, A TIME TO KILL/HOPE FLOATS. Sandra Bullock could use a blockbuster. Insiders are speculating that PRACTICAL MAGIC will boost Bullock's commercial heft, not unlike MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING rejuvenated Julia Roberts' sagging boxoffice. Bullock, who plays a sexy but subdued sorceress, is all smiles. It's good to believe in magic; that erratic streak is likely to disappear. "Magic?" queries the rosy-faced actress. "I'm not so sure I believe in it wholeheartedly, but I do believe that there is something very definitely like magic out there."

"The phrase 'practical magic' essentially means the things that we do or have around us, on a day-to-day basis, that we really don't pay much attention to until later on—when we look back. It's like coincidences, or things that you feel because of fate or destiny or little miracles. It's like...you're thinking of a song and you call someone who's 3,000 miles away and you say, 'Yeah, I was singing a song,' and they're like, 'Oh my God, it's the same exact song I was playing and

I was thinking of you.' How can you explain that? How can you explain these things, where you can walk into a room and instantly fall in love with a person? You've never met them before, but you've known them in some other way. It's all these practical little ways that we tend to neglect all the time, but it's a force that we use instinctually."

"That force can be either good or evil. PRACTICAL MAGIC has to do with, I think, a force of good. The film



Bullock already cast in PRACTICAL MAGIC, recommended Holly Hunter to play her sister. "There was this incredible chemistry there. Talk about magic!"

is based on a novel by Alice Hoffman, and is basically a yarn about how there are those magical events in everybody's life. In the movie, there's a lot of screwy things going on, but, ultimately most of them turn out to be for the best."

"I have to tell you about one of those screwy things. Oddly enough, it wasn't actually in the film. There was this one scene where we're doing an exercise. We got to the integral part where everybody chants together and, all of a sudden, this door on the set started slamming. We all stopped and watched this door just slam and slam, and there was nobody near it—no wind or anything. We learned later on that there was this woman, a consultant who claimed she was a witch, who wanted to be involved in the film more than she actually was. She supposedly put a curse on the whole film when she was let go. Then these things started happening. There was that episode with the door. People started getting sick. It was really weird, and I don't know if that was just coincidence or what—but it was certainly freaky."

Cast as Sally Owens, who comes from a long line of wicca practitioners, Bullock did her homework. "I bought every book on witchcraft, new and old, that I could possibly get my hands on.

SANDRA BULLOCK

"The screenwriter, producer and most of the cast were women: I think the director is likely to be sainted."



"I'm not so sure I believe in magic wholeheartedly. But I do believe that there is something—there's something very definitely like magic." R. Nicole Kidman and Bullock apply PRACTICAL MAGIC to Ginn Vinyl.

I found it interesting that, over a course of centuries, the word "witchcraft" has become almost an obsolete term. So-called witchcraft takes the form of so many other things. There were women working with us on this film that, had they been living two hundred years ago, might have been labeled as witches. Nowadays, though, they're looked upon as people who are more psychic, people who are more in touch with something that we are not. As mere mortals, we aren't able to tap into a lot of these wave lengths, or vibrations, or those things that they are able to. I don't have any of these elements myself, but I enjoyed talking to

the women who were fortunate enough to have those gifts.

"These gifted women are represented in the film by my character, 'Sally' and her sister, 'Gillian,' who's played by Nicole Kidman. What interested me most in PRACTICAL MAGIC was the bond between these two sisters. They are almost like twins in a sense that they know each other so well. They're able to read each other to the point where they can be hundreds of miles away, and one knows the other one is in trouble. They even know what the other one is thinking. They know each other's strengths, each other's weaknesses.

Camouflaged somewhere in the witchcraft scenario is a modern metaphor. "Sally and Gillian were torn apart and then had to come back together, to face a curse that plagues their entire family," continues Bullock, "—the curse being that any man an Owens woman falls in love with will die prematurely. This curse is an age-old thing but I think what Alice Hoffman and our scriptwriter Robin Swicord are trying to say is that it is the youngest, the 'now' generation that has the opportunity to break whatever curse is hanging over a family. If you look at it in basic terms—such as alcoholism, abuse and abandonment—if you feel you have a curse in your family, there's bound to be a negative way of thought with all your antecedents. In PRACTICAL MAGIC, it is up to the



sisters to break the curse. Gillian and Sally don't blame their family for their woes because they feel, as the latest ones in the lineage, that smashing the curse is their responsibility.

Sally has retreated into the facade of a cheerful, slightly nervous single mother. "But she's really a schizophasic," explains Bullock. "She would love to be as normal as she seems but she's not. She's spent her entire life trying to be a traditional woman, but she is just way out there! It's kind of like she's gone against her grain all her life. When the film starts, she is falling completely apart. She is denying who she is and what special



Attention drifted from co-star Jeremy Northam when a bikini-clad Bullock got caught in THE NET (90). U.S. gross: approx. \$10 million. Bullock earned an MTV Movie Award nomination as "Most Desirable Female."

quality she has, because she knows she's different than other women. That's always bothered her, and now she has to deal with it.

"Gillian, on the other hand, is a no-holds-barred gal. She is pretty much a 'what you see is what you get' type. I was the first one cast in PRACTICAL MAGIC, and when our producer, Denise Di Novi, was looking for a devil-may-care sort to play Gillian, Nicole [Kidman] kept popping into my mind. I honestly don't know where that came from, because I had never met her in my life. But I felt she would be the perfect person because we are so different in temperament. Our energies are so diametrically opposed that I somehow knew we needed what the other person had. Nicole was eventually cast and, fortunately, my feelings about her turned out to be true. We had this real strong affection for each other. There was also this incredible chemistry that was there, almost like real sisters. Talk about magic!"

But Bullock insists that the "real magic" is wielded by director Griffin Dunne, whose own acting résumé includes a couple of cult films (e.g. AFTER HOURS). "Griffin is really a wizard. I don't mean that in the literal, supernatural sense. In the creative thought processes and in the ability to listen to everybody, he is unmatched. He gives every single person credit. If someone came up with the best idea in the film, Griffin would never ever say

that the idea was his. He would automatically give credit to that person. He's smart, and he's funny. There's a lot to this movie that is humorous, and he keys into that so very well."

"Griffin started out as an actor. He played the guy who came back from the dead in AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. I think his experience as an actor helped him tremendously with his directorial abilities. He also has the capacity to keep his head when everyone around him is losing theirs. There were a lot of things that fell apart, then came back together and he handled them so well. If a scene wasn't working, he was able to pull things out of his hand. You have no idea where they came from, but they're absolutely spot on."

"If I'm painting a portrait of him that sounds too good to be true, it's not all perfection with Griffin. He is, to put it bluntly, a freak. He is very unstable and there's something very wrong with him. But he knows it! I can say he's a freak because he would say the same thing about himself."

"In fairness to Griffin, his freakiness was probably aggravated by the fact that the producer, the scriptwriter, and most of the cast of PRACTICAL MAGIC were women. It must have been a complete roller coaster for him. Once one of us started crying, it was the domino effect and he just stood there and said, 'Okay, I'm in a room with a bunch of women.' It was very hard on him, but he managed to deal with us very well. He loves women. But I do believe Griffin sprouted a few extra gray hairs because of us—and especially at that certain time of the month when women get on the same cycle, and he was right in the middle of it. I'm of the opinion that he is going to be knighted and sainted for all he had to take on this film. He deserves it."

Bullock and Griffin developed enough of a rapport to "half seriously" discuss another collaboration—specifically, a TV series. "We're going to go ahead and tape it now, and then release it when we're like 60. We're doing this because we feel we're ahead of our time with this series and, when it's released, we'll still be young. We have real good plans for the future."

"There's more than whimsy involved in that plan. In this business, if a film is bad, your ass really gets whooped. Nobody looks at anyone else except for you and they say, 'That film

Co-starring with Sylvester Stallone in THE DEMOLITION MAN (91), Bullock earned a Razzie nomination as Worst Supporting Actress. Two years later, she earned a Golden Globe nomination—Best Actress—for WHEN YOU WERE SLEEPING.



SANDRA BULLOCK

"If a film is bad, your ass gets whooped. They look at no one else but you and say, 'It stunk: your fault.'"

stunk and it's all your fault.' I can think of a couple of pictures I was in, where the reception was not the most favorable and—although nobody pointed a finger at me per se—it still hurt. Maybe planning for a TV series, decades in advance, gives a little bit more security.

"I don't think that you-were-responsible-for-that-bomb syndrome is going to happen with PRACTICAL MAGIC. We have a great producer, director, scriptwriter and a dynamic cast. Stockard Channing and Dianne Wiest are playing the parts of Sally's great aunts, Frances and Jett, who are also witches. Stockard manages to come up with these things that are so far out, yet at the same time are part and parcel of her personality. Dianne is one of the cutest, sweetest people. You have no idea that she's acting, and she's just this incredibly free, gentle spirit. I love being around her. We have plans to get into a tequila drinking match one of these days. She thinks she can beat me. She probably can but I'm going to try, anyway."

"Aidan Quinn plays my boyfriend, Gary Hallet. My mom said something about Aidan which was right on. She said that you look at Aidan and the man comes off as having an incredible amount of integrity. You can see that in his eyes. A really good actor, which Aidan is, can say nothing and say more than most people who talk and talk and talk—people like myself."

"Goran Visnjic is Gillian's lover, Jimmy—a thoroughly bad egg. Goran is from Croatia, and I absolutely love his accent. He says that, someday, he is going to go to Las Vegas. I say, 'Goran, it's Las Vegas.' He really had the hardest job of anybody in the cast. He had to pull off something that would be so easy to pull off badly, but he had this ability to grasp our language—he's only been speaking English for a year now—and make a really credible character out of Jimmy."

"Jimmy is such a bad guy that he literally returns from the dead to haunt Sally and Gillian. Or, at least, he appears to return from the dead. That element of the uncertain is what



Perhaps still smarting over SPEED 2, Bullock recalls, "I can think of a couple of movies I was in, where the reception was not the most favorable. And—although nobody pointed a finger at me per se—it still hurt."

I firmly believe PRACTICAL MAGIC is trying to bring across. It is a film that shows what's inside your head—the darkest moments, the sweetest moments, the lowest moments, the scariest moments. Is this person—this man, my soul mate—the one I've been waiting for all my life? Is this demon, this apparition, really standing here in front of me, or am I just imagining him? In the novel, you're never sure if the presence of this magic is real or just a projection of love or fear. We've

tried to do the same thing with the film. There are some beautiful moments, and there are some unbelievably scary ones; but which of them, if any, are reality? There are some clues, but, like the novel, you're never quite sure. I just like to think that PRACTICAL MAGIC is a film that should be taken on its own. Sure, there seem to be visions and manifestations, and spirits rising from the dead, but we can't really explain them. Why try? They just are."

Shae Marks

THE STAR OF BIKINIS N' BALLISTICS PIX IS A SCI-FI ADDICT.





Striking a pose for *TV*, Shannen Doherty is retiring her trademark bikini for a recurrent role in Roger Corman's *BLACK SCORPION*. Her mid-8 television series also stars Athena Massey (pages 42 and 50).



Diane Marks: former lingerie model, is described by her co-star Julie Strain as "an outstanding actress, a babe from top to bottom, every man's fantasy and, even better, she's my pal."

PROFILE BY
BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

Yesterday, she was striking poses for Playboy's *Vagabond Vixens*. Today, she's querying the *FF* editor about her role in a stage production of *Bus Stop*. "I don't want my Cherie to be a Marilyn Monroe impersonation. You've talked to ingénues. What kind of Hollywood hierarchy would Cherie fit into?" Shae Marks would prefer to circumvent her post-Playboy career as the familiar centerfold-turned-starlet (a playboy traditionally cast as extras in A-movies, oft billed as "hikini girl near pool"). Marks would prefer a moderated abridgement something like centerfold-turned-actress.

I get the feeling she's pretty sick of playing eye candy, but it won't be easy for Marks to shake the typecasting. Back in '95, she debuted on *MARRIED WITH CHILDREN* as a Swedish masseuse named Inga; on another episode, she was cast as Al Bundy's horny fantasy. And things haven't really changed. Not yet.

Another problem Marks is drop-dead gorgeous, and casting directors translate this Aphrodite facade into window dressing (decorative bits, no dialogue necessary). God knows, she's already had plenty of experience as a mannequin. Born in New Orleans, Marks was modeling lingerie in Houston when she was discovered by a Playboy photographer. Two weeks later, she struck poses in Los Angeles. Within six months, Marks made a more permanent move to Tinseltown and posed for print gigs. *Venus Swayze*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Bikini Magazine*. Introduced to film via *COVER ME*, an HBO production starring Paul Sorvino, Marks admits her role was less than memorable: "I die in the movie. I don't want to play girlfriends who are just fluff—I like to work in big pictures."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DUANE POLCOURT

SHAE MARKS

"I don't want to play girlfriends who are just fluff. I like to work in big pictures, and I won't take any role in which I don't speak. Even a small role in a big budget movie puts you on a different level. The only B-films I do are for Andy."

Andy Sidaris (14, 23), pioneering auteur of the "bikinis & ballistics" subgenre, hired Marks to play "Tiger" in *DAY OF THE WARRIOR* ('96), a role that she reprised in *RETURN TO SAVAGE BEACH* ('98). The ensemble cast included Julie Strain, Julie K. Smith and Carolyn Lisa. The reviews, as usual, were unanimous ("A turbocharged, hysterical flesh-feast that leaves no hadjo untold, no surgically augmented chest unexposed," wrote *Entertainment*).

"Working with Andy is like being in college with a bunch of kids," grins Marks. "We all stayed in one hotel, and it was such a neat experience."

I drop the name of snobster film, something called *SCORING*, while popping



T. Repeating their roles from *DAY OF THE WARRIOR*, Marks and Julie K. Smith return to *Savage Beach*. P. Stealing Costner's big scene. R. Julie Strain & Marks were photographed by producer Ariane Giocanti for the box art. "The guns we carry are饰ed by our own big, lascivious pens," notes Strain.



another tape into the recorder. It was a softcore vehicle for Monique Parent, an erotic thriller diva. "I was on camera for about 30 seconds in that film," Marks shrugs. "If I had known more about the director, Paul Thomas—who did adult movies—I wouldn't have done it. You do these things before you get street smarts. You say 'okay' to



just about any role just because they want you.

"My first major role was in *DAY OF THE WARRIOR*. I had just come out of TV, so stepping into the film arena was a big move. Working for Andy removed the fluff. So much is done for you in bigger pictures. On Andy's sets, you really get to see how it's done. You can watch the lighting crew set up. Everybody pitches in and helps."

Marks also enjoys the in-

jokes of the Sedaris oeuvre, particularly its allusions to 007's film legacy. "I'm a big fan of the James Bond movies," she enthuses. "I love movies like *DR. NO* and *GOLDFINGER*. I'd love to be a Bond girl. In fact, there are two things that I'd really like to accomplish: to be a Bond girl and to do an episode of *STAR TREK*."

Be still my heart. Marks isn't only a self-professed Trekkie, but a dyed-in-the-

wool, certifiable science fiction aficionado. "My favorite sci-fi movie is *DAY OF THE TRIFIDS*," she notes. "The '63 version Julie Christie and I had a pajama party one time, and we watched it. It's a really cool movie. I often go over to Universal Studios; they have such a cool selection of classic movies. They pull movies out I never even heard of, but those are the ones I like to rent. The Sci-Fi Channel just doesn't do it for me. I

like the really obscure stuff."

She is, however, addicted to the classic sci-fi that's tailored for the TV medium. Stuff like *THE X-FILES* and *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*. "What I loved about the old *OUTER LIMITS* show was that the narrator's voice set the mood," she grins. While shopping for movies last year, Marks sampled a profusion of genres: "I'm really into the John Woo stuff. But I rented a couple of cannibal

RETURN TO SAVAGE BEACH L: Marks and Julie K. Smith R: Smith, Marks, Carrie Westcott and Julie Strain as *LETHAL* ladies. "The female characters aren't amazing resemblances to Lars Croft," wrote cyberspace critic, Oh, the Humanity

Marks insists that "Working with [director] Andy [Stern] is like being in college."



SHAE MARKS

"I'm a big fan of 007, I love movies like DR. NO and GOLDFINGER. In fact, there's two things that I'd like to accomplish: to be a Bond girl and to do an episode of STAR TREK."

Photographer Diana Palma describes Marks as "desperately, unashamedly sexy; never at a loss for visual metaphors. Beneath the sweet exterior is a determined sense of where she wants to go."

films, and I found them disgusting!—too real for me. The other kind of cinema I like is a movie like HENRY AND JUNE, with Fred Ward and Uma Thurman as Henry and June Miller. Mr. Miller was fascinating. My author friend, Brenda Venus, wrote a book about him called *Dear, Dear Henry.*"

There's some buzz on the Web that Marks may embody *Jungle Janet*, a comic book character that exists only in cyberspace. The voluptuous heroine, who's "good enough to eat," is pursued by hungry predators—including mutant fish that bait delicious, bikini-clad beauties and aliens operating a food franchise (earth women are the preferred delicacy of extraterrestrial gourmets). Dennis Stahl (aka Peter Boggs), creator of *Jungle Janet*, admits the food scenario is a contrivance for the heroine to lose her clothes and wind-up, literally, in hot water: "Struggling in the comics

field for 18 years, I've done adult parades like *Mr. Fantastic*. But my real love is slapstick. In *Jungle Janet*, there's a lot of Benny Hill-type humor, and it's all very politically incorrect. It's light B&D stuff. Janet is really based on the good-looking women you see in the movies of Jim Wynorski, Fred Olen Ray and Andy Sidaris."

Marks was recently photographed as a "jungle castaway," though insiders insist the spread isn't related to *Jungle Janet* but allied with *The Safari Sisters*, a sleighing comic book by London Night magazin Everett Hartson, who hired Carmen Electra as the incarnation of his illustrated vampire, *Embrace (FF 99)*. Stay tuned.

"Everyone has a way of getting what they want," Marks opines. "And when you work on one of Andy's movies, he gets what he wants and you get what you want. The great thing about those films is that you don't

feel pressured. Andy has a way of making you feel at ease. A director doesn't have to be an ogre. You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar, and he spreads honey everywhere.

"Not only that, I've never seen a problem on his set with actresses. When you get four beautiful women together, you usually have problems, but the *Julies* (Strain and Smith) and everybody else are just great. A week after living in Shreveport on RETURN TO SAVAGE BEACH, we were jumping up and down about the prospect of staying in a Holiday Inn. Mid-summer in Shreveport is hot, humid anduggy, but the great thing about working on these films is that you're only there for two and a half or three weeks; it's a four to five week shoot, total. So you're not sitting around for a month, you're working the whole time."

Between films, Marks is hosting a "TV travegue" series produced by Timbuktu Entertainment: "If the show sells, it will involve a lot of commuting to exotic places for 22 weeks out of the year".

Oscamming her web (www.shaemarks.com—she didn't have to twist my arm for this shameless plug), Marks has turned entrepreneur. But what about her credibility as an actress? C'mon, Andy Sidaris is all about camp and risible dialogue ("I think I have to change"). But acting? What separates Marks, Playboy's May '94 centerfold, from 44 years of Playmates/movie star wanna-bees? "Well, for one thing, I'm studying acting full time at the Beverly Hills Playhouse," she says. "My voice coach is Robert Eastman, who's highly respected in the business. I'm

26 and I don't know where I'll be in ten years. But I'm dedicated. I'm going to scratch my way up. If your balls aren't up against the wall, then you're not trying. And if you don't try, you learn nothing."

Postscript: Roger Corman is among the fatidick casting Marks in THE BLACK SCORPION, a sci-fi series, the producer furnished her with "a comedic, recurrent role." And Kevin Eastman, who's directing Marks in his supernatural saga PHASMO-PHOBIA, recalls, "We were looking for a Sherylyn Fenn-type and Shae fit the bill. Sure, she's very photogenic, but her film character is a TV producer who suffers a gamut of emotions—it's not someone who struts around in a micro-bikini. For the first time, you'll fall in love—not in lust—with Shae Marks. Or maybe both."

RETURN TO SAVAGE BEACH: Marks explains "on the set of Andy Sidaris' film, everyone pitches-in and helps"



YVONNE CRAIG BATGIRL

THE ORIGINAL CURVY CRUSADER RECALLS THE SERIES, THE PENGUIN, HER ELVIS FILMS & "MARS NEEDS WOMEN."

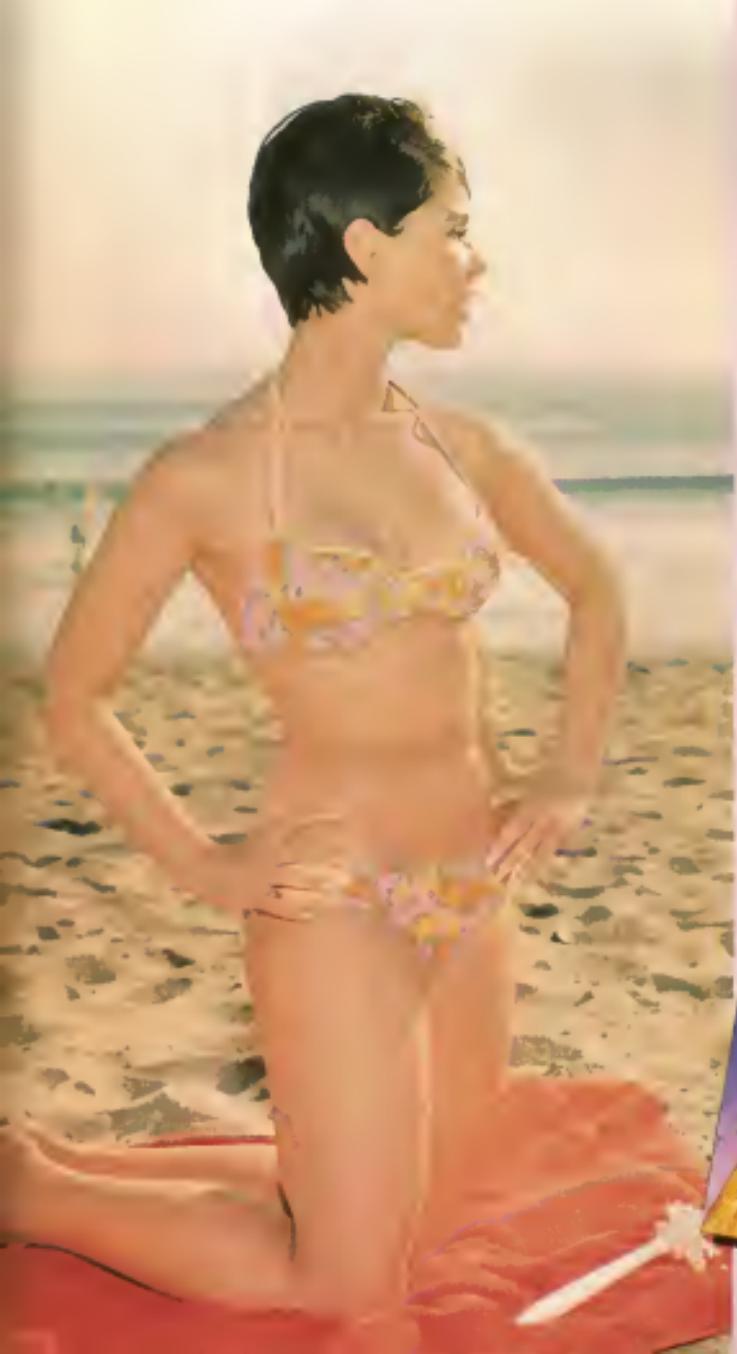
BY LAURA SCHIFF



I never thought it possible, but I did it: I took Batgirl by surprise. I told Yvonne Craig that she qualified as #1 in this year's *FF* retro, Sci-Fi's 50 Sexiest (the entire tally will be printed later this year). Matter of fact, as author of the "50 Sexiest," I gauged Craig as the sexiest sci-fi icon of all time. She was shocked.

"When I played Batgirl on the show, I wasn't aware that—30 years later—I would even be talking about it!" she gasps. "I don't know what to attribute [the show's] longevity to, other than the fact that I think it looked so different. It was the only time you ever saw on television what you saw if you opened a comic book—but with real people."

Yvonne Craig is real people. Down-to-earth, gracious, funny. Listening to her recollections of Batgirl, and alter ego Barbara Gordon (the lesbian and daughter of Gotham City's police commissioner), is as entertaining as any show on TV today. "It was just the best experience," Craig says of her time spent behind the mask. "I couldn't believe they would pay me to do this. And



"Young women who say Batgirl was their role model. It's because it was the first time they felt girls could do the same things as guys."

the man thing about it is that I knew it was a wonderful experience when it was happening. You know how people always look back and say, 'Oh, I *were* so happy then.' I knew I was happy then. [Getting paid] was just icing on the cake. I rode a motorcycle in those days, so, of course, I rode [Batgirl's] motorcycle. And I got to do my own stunts. The stunts were all choreographed on a count, and I had been a ballet dancer, so that was easy. It filled in the day, because I would go off with Adam and Burt's stunt doubles and work out the choreography. So I wasn't just sitting on the set waiting for my next scene."

"Wait a minute," I say. "Are you telling me that you did your own stunts, but Adam West and Burt Ward—Batman and Robin—had to

L. Craig as '80s cheerleader. R. Lauren Schrift, chief of F7's L.A. bureau, describes Craig as the earliest sex-queen of all time. In her forthcoming novel,



rely on stunt doubles to pull off their fight sequences?"

"If I were the producer," says Craig, "I would do it the same way. Everybody was taking a punch at [West and Ward], and so you don't want to know that your lead actor now has his nose where his ear is. But, with me, the villains were just grabbing for me. Nobody was throwing a punch that might smash up my face. Hubie Kerns, the stunt coordinator, did Adam's stunts. And that's why, if you look at that show, Adam looks fine until he



To Ann a favorite double, J. Avenue the Batcycle, which she really maneuvered, Craig sold Batgirl in a Testimini, uncredited presentation reel for BATMAN, season #3

gets into the fight scenes—and then suddenly he has a little pot belly! I can't believe that they would let any man with that kind of stomach on him wear a leotard!"

"Do you have a favorite episode?" I ask.

"Well, the [third season's] first episode, 'Enter Batgirl, East Penguin' [8/14/67]," she says. "Just because I loved the concept, which was that if The Penguin married me, he would then be part of the Commissioner's family and he could do any old thing he wanted to. It was wonderful working with Burgess [Meredith, who played The Penguin]. What an amazing man. He had a career that spanned 60 years! He was on Broadway, he was in movies, he was The Penguin. Then he had a resurgence of interest and was in *ROCKY*, and, it just went on and on!"

I asked Craig what she thought of Alicia Silverstone's portrayal of Batgirl in last year's *BATMAN &*

ROBIN. "I would have cast Courteney Cox," she replies, "because my association was with Batman, not with Robin. When they announced that Alicia Silverstone was going to do it, I said, 'Wonderful!' Because she's just right for playing opposite Chris O'Donnell. But they didn't give her anything to do. And they put her in a RoboCop outfit so you couldn't see her. I was disappointed, because I loved her in *CLUELESS*. Maybe in the next [Batman film], she'll get to do something."

In addition to playing the comic book icon, Craig appeared in *MARS NEEDS WOMEN* (1966), which, not unlike another sci-fi turkey, *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*, has attracted a legion of cult fans. Craig played a geneticist who is supposed to be captured by a Martian, and brought back to the red planet to save their dying race. Instead, the Martian falls in love with

her and doesn't have the heart to kidnap her. Directed by schlockmeister Larry Buchanan (*CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE*), the film starred Tommy Kirk—formerly a kiddie contract player for Disney—as the amorous alien.

Says Craig, "I took that film, number one, because it was being shot in Dallas and that's where my family lived. And, also, my agent had sent [the script] to me and said, 'How would you like to do this?' And I said, 'I don't want to do science fiction. I hate science fiction.' So then I read it and I thought, 'Okay, this isn't bad. There are not little people running around in green suits.' So I enjoyed doing it. But there was a lot of technobabble that I didn't understand. I said to the director, 'Look, I'm going to make my voice go up and down like I know what I'm talking about but, in the event that my eyes glaze over and it

sounds like I don't, cut!' Craig laughs out loud at the memory.

"What was it like working with Elvis Presley?" I ask her.

"That was a fun experience," she says. "I did two movies with Elvis. I did just a small sequence in *IT HAPPENED AT THE WORLD'S FAIR* ('63) and I was the leading lady in *KISSIN' COUSINS* ('64). It was a joy to work with Elvis. He was very professional. Always arrived on time, knew what he was doing, knew what his fans expected of him. He was just a lovely Southern gentleman. He would call me Bug, because I wore big sunglasses and I looked like a bug!"

These days, Craig is far from inactive. For starters, she's an avid adventure traveler. "My husband and I have gone on probably eight photographic safari trips to Africa. We went white water rafting in Ecuador and we were in the Galapagos. I'm mainly animal-oriented, so, if you see a premise me that I'll see a squirrel, I'll go."

Today, Craig is heading out to the computer store to purchase some voice recognition software. The technology will hopefully expedite the writing of her biography, *From Bad Girl to Bat-Girl and Beyond*. "I'm writing the book myself, which is why it's taking so bloody long!" Craig laughs. "I did about five chapters, zip, zap, and then rested on my laurels for a very long time. I type like a chimp, so it takes forever. My husband says the voice recognition software is remarkable. I hope that it will recognize my voice and that it will madly type as I talk. I found, with the chapters that I did write, that I left out a lot of things because I was tired of typing." Craig says she is debating whether to self-publish or go with a publishing house.

When she's not working on her memoirs or on safaris,

"I said, 'I hate science fiction.' Then I read the [MARS NEEDS WOMEN] script and I thought, 'Not bad. There aren't little green people.'"

Craig schmooses with her many fans on the convention circuit. "I meet young women who say Batgirl was their role model," Craig tells me. "They say it's because it was the first time they ever felt girls could do the same things guys could do, and sometimes better. I think that's lovely. Now that had very little to do with me, and a lot to do with the writers. I usually do about four conventions a year and a percentage of all the proceeds goes to my favorite charity, The Santa Barbara Breast Cancer Institute. And then I always reassure everyone, no, I did not, nor do I now, as far as I know, have breast cancer. But Dr. Otto Sartorius was doing really cutting edge, remarkable, non-invasive research and I thought it was needed. I really enjoy doing the conventions. I lead a very quiet life, so I don't have a lot of interaction with people. I find that you really have to be up for these conventions, because it's interacting from the moment you sit down until you leave. You're a lump rag at the end of the day, but it's fun because you're meeting—as I said—young women who thought that you were a role model then. You're also meeting families, where guys will say, 'Oh my God, I had such a crush on you, and now I watch it with my little boy or my little girl.' So I think it's lovely to be part of something that still holds up, and can be seen by children and their families. It really is family entertainment." □



Craig's movie credits include fluff like GIGI-GERT and SKI PARTIE. Her TV credits were significantly edgier: STAR TREK ("When Gods Behaved"), THE WILD, WILD WEST, et al. Ironically, Craig has professed a distaste for the genre.



Athena Massey, photographed by Peter Hartlaub, personifies a breed of femme fatales that crime fans describe as "the Spilano doll." Director Max A. Gailine notes, "People who say Mickey Spilane is sexist—well, that his women are bimbos—just haven't read his work."

MICKEY SPILLANE THE MYTH

HIS RECIPE FOR IMMORTALITY: CHILL-OUT CENSORS, HARD BROIL SEX & VIOLENCE FOR NON-CONSERVATIVE TASTES.

BY MATTHEW V. CLEMENS

"Mickey Spillane should be as important a twentieth century icon as Marilyn Monroe, Elvis or the Beatles," says Max Allan Collins, the renowned mystery author and independent filmmaker whom critics have gauged as the world's foremost authority on Spillane.

"Though he doesn't receive the kind of attention lavished on the others," Collins continues, "he is every bit as important as they were in shaping what's happening in entertainment today."

Collins, currently working on a documentary that chronicles the life and career of Spillane, has been a fan of both the author and his literary creation—consummate private eye Mike Hammer—since age 12. When asked why a documentary on his long-time hero? Collins replies, "Two reasons. I wanted to do another feature but knew, because of time constraints, that I wouldn't be able to mount a production of one of my own scripts. Plus, I have always wanted to do a prose biography of Mickey. In fact, along with Jim Taylor, I did a more critical study called *Mickey Spillane's Mike Ham-*



Adapted from the Spillane novel, *KISS AND BEABLY* provoked a condemned rating from the Legion of Decency. Baby Rogers, voicing a nuclear geek (R), bursts into tears in an ending that, until recently, was declared ambiguous.

mer. One Lonely Knight, but Mickey is still threatening to do an autobiography, so a book-form he was out of the question. The documentary seemed to be the next logical step."

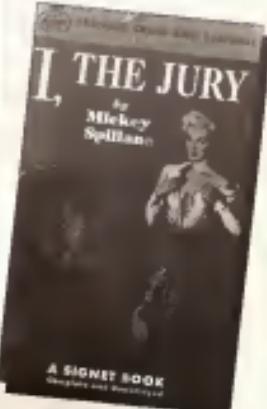
The impending documentary is one of the media venues that's finally earning Frank Morrison "Mickey" Spillane some of the celebrity that has long eluded him.

And Mike Hammer, his smash-mouth, gun-loving hero of 13 novels—who's been adapted into a couple of television series and almost a dozen movies—has made a comeback. Stacy Keach plays the title role on *MIKE HAMMER, PRIVATE EYE*, a syndicated television series launched last year. It's the third time in his career that Keach was

cast as the hardboiled gumshoe. Shannon Whirry, former erotic thriller diva (3-2), portrays Velma, Hammer's sennuous secretary. Contributing to Spillane's curvy cast of damsels, Tracy Scoggins (2-3) appeared as femme fatale Beth Reynolds on the "Beat Street" episode.

Black Alley, the latest Mike Hammer novel, debuted in hardcover during November, 1986; released in paperback the following summer, retailers reported brisk sales.

Hammer's luster was al-



so renewed with the restoration of *KISS ME DEADLY*, the provocative, 1955 film noir classic. Surfacing on video, laserdisc and the American Movie Classics network, the film impacted—shocked!—Gen X with actor Ralph Meeker's depiction of Hammer as a decidedly un sympathetic, even savage dick. Velda (Maxine Cooper), his "girl Friday," is exploited as "kind of a prostitute who seduces clients and sets them up for a double cross." The unfathomable dispensations of sex and sadism prompted the Legion of Decency to slap the movie with a "Condemned" rating. A San Francisco Chronicle critic noted (Oct. 6, 1955), "If *KISS ME DEADLY* were a brand-new film, it would still be shocking in its mean spirit, its happy brutality and its audacious mix of real and surreal elements... this Robert Aldrich film is much more twisted and cynical than anything Spillane ever conceived. The first time I saw it alone, on videotape, it gave me nightmares."

Until recently, the only accessible cut of *KISS ME DEADLY* concluded with a confusing fade-out scene: Hammer and Velda appear to be trapped inside a blaz-

Art for one of Spillane's 1951 novels. The author denounces sex and violence better: "I write what people want."

MAX ALLAN COLLINS, FILMMAKER

"Mickey Spillane is not just a writer but a true star. He opened the floodgates for James Bond and Dirty Harry, and he really belongs on the Mount Rushmore of hardboiled writers."



Robert Aldrich helms *KISS ME DEADLY*. "It's a no-nonsense detective film then you could imagine, complete with one-half of a sado-masochistic ending," wrote Mike of the Movies. "It's a brilliant classic that allows Aldrich as an exceptional director."

ing house, which explodes into a nuclear inferno, as "The End" crawls on-screen. So why would the public—without query—buy into this downbeat ending? Collins suspects that audiences of the 1950s couldn't relate to Hammer's immoral anti-hero: a fiery demise was payoff for his opportunistic streak. But why would Velda perish as a sort of sacrificial lamb? (Chastisement for her promiscuous life-style?).

And why would the producers pour-on a surfeit of unrestrained violence but hypocritically excuse Hammer for portraying their hot man? Hammer's societal furore was a barometer of the times. Soldiers returning from World War II were searching for a catharsis. Not unlike what they experienced on the battlefield, the vets—declining Hollywood's antisocial violence—preferred grit, as close to the real thing as censors would allow. Spillane and Mike Hammer gave it to them by raising the ante on

sex and violence to an unprecedented level.

But, in retrospect, Hammer and Velda actually survived the inexcusable ending of *KISS ME DEADLY*. A print of Aldrich's unexpurgated version, languishing in the Director's Guild vaults, was unearthed a few years ago. The 89-second addendum of running time clearly shows, without ambiguity, Hammer and Velda exiting the burning beach house and running to safety in the surf (the complete story of the movie's restoration is documented in *FF* 8/10/11).

But the controversy provoked by *KISS ME DEADLY* has never dissolved. Whether manifested in print or on film, Spillane's trademark viscerality—the rap on the jaw, graphic torture and rapid gunfire—is ritualistically berated by critics. When *MICKEY SPILLANE'S MIKE HAMMER* was initially incarnated on television (1967-'59), TV Guide described it as "easily the worst show on TV." Var-

city dismissed the series as "a mixture of blood, violence, and sex." (Angie Dickenson, *FF* 6/10/11, was rubbed-out in the pilot). Darren McGavin, who played Hammer, shot 78 episodes.

Spillane, who only demands his work when severely pressed, succinctly notes, "I wrote what the people wanted." Considering the nearly 200 million books he's sold over the years, it's an observation that can't be disputed. "Without Spillane," Collins says, "there couldn't have been a James Bond, a Dirty Harry or a Spenser for Hire: none of them could have happened without Mickey Spillane first opening the floodgates. Whether they acknowledge the debt or not, there is absolutely no question that Spillane started it and it permeates the culture. The Mike Hammer figures are everywhere—Andy Sipowicz on *NYPD BLUE*, for instance. Ironically, the Mike Hammer character on television has sometimes been less of a Mike Hammer character than some of the imitators. That may be due in part to the medium itself."

Hammer's violent legacy was embodied by a variance of Hammers. TV: McGavin, Kevin Dobson, Stacy Keach, Meeker, Bill Elliott, Robert Bray, Armand Assante and even Spillane.

Rob Estes was cast as Hammer, and Pamela Anderson as Velda, in the inevitable lampoon, *COME DIE WITH ME*, a made-for-TV movie (1994). Hammer's best friend, Detective Patrick Chambers—who, in the Spillane novels, doesn't condone Hammer's hardboiled tactics—is gender-bended into a very batch Pat Chambers (played by actress/model Durlane Fluegell). Wearing a leather vest and combat boots, Fluegell—replete with cropped hair—is polarized from the traditional "Spillane Doll," a smoldering personage traditionally linked to the writer's work. And that brings us to anoth-



er sore point...

Spillane has also been labeled a sexist. This perception is partially a result of the film and TV adaptations, where the female characters are stereotypically rendered into the gumshoe's blonde, hokey and vulnerable squeezes. "People who say that Spillane is sexist, and that his female characters are bimbos, just haven't read his work," Collins says. "Velda, particularly, is every bit the equal of Mike Hammer. In fact, in some ways, she is Mike's superior. She has become a licensed private eye, carries a gun, and goes anywhere Hammer goes. Also, the villain is sometimes a woman: a prime example is Charlotte Manning who, in *I, The Jury*, nearly defeats Hammer. She, too, is Mike's equal—just as ruthless, just as violent, sort of the flip-side of Mike. It's only in the end that he's able to overcome her. There wouldn't have been a hook if she'd been a bimbo."

Spillane, in fact, is venerated by a legion of mystery writers (Walter Mosley, Sara Paretsky, Lawrence Block, etc.), all of whom volunteered to shoot testimonies for Collins' documentary, and all admit that Spillane's literature had influenced their own careers. Patty McCormack, who portrayed the original *BAD SEED* (1956) and co-starred with Spillane in both *MOMMY* and *MOMMY'S DAY*, also participated in the project. "If you didn't know who Mickey was, you'd swear he was a professional actor," says McCormack. "He's that good. He has a very male charisma about him. He reminds me of Robert Mitchum or Robert Ryan in that way. It's the type of charisma you don't see much anymore."

Collins initially became acquainted with Spillane at the '81 installment of Bouceron, a conclave for mystery authors. "I was so much in his sway as a writer that I was actually afraid to meet him," recounts Collins. "So



Spillane played his fictional death, Marlene Dietrich, in THE ISLE HUMIDE the "goddess behind-the-scenes" (opposite). Shirley Eaton (left).

many times people meet their heroes, only to find out that they're flaming assholes. If Mickey had been one of those, it would have been devastating to me. But when we met, he was very kind. Our friendship grew from there."

And it blossomed. Spillane is godfather to Collins'

continued on page 68



MICKEY SPILLANE ALIAS MIKE HAMMER

THE WRITER RECALLS THE REJECTION ("TOO RACY"),
THE CLIMB UP THE BEST-SELLER LISTS, HOLLYWOOD & DOLLS.

By MATTHEW V. CLEMENS

Mickey Spillane has been described as a man's man. And a ladies' man. But, upon meeting him, you realize that Spillane is his own man. Thick-set and 79 years old, he's shorter than you'd expect. But the swagger, the fiery glint in his green eyes, and the erect bearing leave no doubt that you're shaking hands with The Man. A finger on his right hand is adorned with a ring as big as a fist—a gift from the Miller Brewery for serving as spokesperson in Lite Beer commercials, and it's the only ostentatious thing about Spillane. He is simple, direct. Like Jehovah's Witnesses since 1951, he's a man of strong faith and convictions. With Mickey Spillane, there are very few gray areas.

His popularity is currently enjoying a resurgence due, in part, to the renewed production of *MIKE HAMMER, PRIVATE EYE*, a TV series based on Spillane's short-tempered sleuth. Then there's the brouhaha over footage restored to *KISS ME DEADLY*, a '55 re-



Cast as his fictional pseudonym Mike Hammer in *THE GIRL HUNTERS* (1963), writer Mickey Spillane plays with "act" Shirley Eaton (PP's 16). "I did all right [as Hammer], but it's not my job. I'm no actor. I don't want to get involved in that Hollywood stuff."

lease—adapted from one of Spillane's "Mike Hammer" novels—which critics regard as "one of the prime influences of the French 'new wave' cinema of Truffaut and Godard." The resulting publicity may have been the catalyst for a planned restoration of *THE GIRL HUNTERS*, a neglected '63 thriller with Spillane cast as Mike Hammer. And I, The Jacy, Spillane's first novel—which was twice adapted into movies—is celebrating

the 50th anniversary of its original publication.

I was introduced to Spillane, sometime in 1994, on one of the Muscatine, Iowa locations for *MOMMY*. He was moonlighting as an actor for Max Allan Collins, a friend who was directing the independently produced film. Two days of his grueling had lapsed before I no longer addressed him as "Mr. Spillane"; he prefers his friends to call him "Mickey."

During the shoot, he was

battling a massive infection that had turned his left leg a sickly purple from knee to ankle. Though he performed on cue, we postponed an interview until he recovered. We spoke briefly when Spillane, reprising his role in the sequel (*MOMMY 2: MOMMY'S DAY*), returned to Iowa. It wasn't until a couple of months later that the writer finally found the leisure time to sit down for a chat.

When did you turn pro?

In 1935, right out of high school. I typed with only two fingers, still do. Made a lot of mistakes, but you get better with practice. I worked in magazines. I was writing for *Collier's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Liberty*. I didn't start writing books until after the war.

How many books have you written?

(Waving his hand in dismissal) People ask me that all the time. I don't know, 40 or so. It's not how many you've written, it's how many have you sold.

How many have you sold? (Grimacing) Most of them. But don't ask me the titles

MICKEY SPILLANE

"When I came out of the war, paperbacks were just starting. It's the market I aimed for. When I wrote 'I, The Jury', I was rejected by 3 or 4 publishing houses: they said it was too sexual."

Pretty heady company.

(Nodding) Sometimes they'll put out these lists—"The 20 bestsellers of all-time," "The top 10 sellers of the past 20 years," like that. I'm on all of them. At least up to *The Godfather*, then things began to change.

There was a story you told me about a critic who was giving me a hard time.

(Laughing) Yeah, that's a good one. It was at a tea party, I think around 1953. I will remember the words. This guy said, "Mr. Spillane, it's a terrible commentary on the reading habits of the American public that you have seven of the top ten all-time bestsellers." I don't usually come up with fast remarks, but, this time, I turned to the guy and said, "You're lucky I didn't write three more."

Good line.

I was lucky. You gotta remember that when I came out of the war, paperbacks were just starting. That's the market I aimed for. When I wrote *I, The Jury*, I was rejected by three or four publishing houses. They said I was too racy, too sexual for the marketplace.

What changed?

Rosece Fawcett. He was just a distributor then, not a publisher. He called New American Library and told them that if they'd publish it, he'd distribute it. NAL thought it was a good idea so they went with it. Fawcett told them he wanted a million copies and they laughed at him. They printed a quarter of a million and we sold out in two days. That's what happened.

You were in the comic book business too.

I was, but I got out of the comic books then and got into paperbacks. Mike Hammer was originally a comic

book character named *Mike Danger*. That's the comic book that's out now. [Co-written with Max Allan Collins, *Mike Danger* was published by DC in 1996.]

Do you still read today?

Whatever I can get my hands on. There's a lot of legal writers today. I like Graham. I just finished this book by an FBI profiler...I forgot his name.

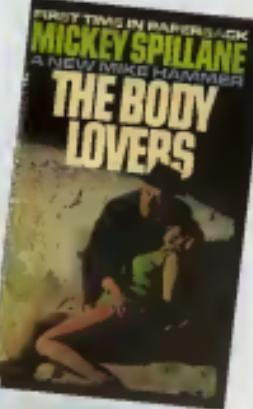
John Douglas?

Yeah, great hook. But I read whatever's around. You have to understand, writers today are better than we were. Their training is so much better. I tell people, "I'm not an author, I'm a writer." That's how I make my living. It's a business. Show business has two words. The first one doesn't matter. The second one, it's a business. That's what matters.

Tell me your definition of the perfect book.

The perfect book is one

Also embroiled in the print medium, Spillane posed for his 1951 paperback, *The Body Lovers*.



Thought not dead, of THE GIRL, MIGHTERS, Spillane responds to another Shirley Eaton ("Absolute Fan"). One year after her rendezvous with "Mike Hammer," Eaton—now the "Golden Girl"—had a try at with Jones (read in GOLDEN GIRL).

of them

There are a few classics we all know the tales of.

The classic is probably *I, The Jury*. I heard recently that a pristine hardback of that one was going for \$8,000.

Let's back up a little. Where were you born?

New York City. I stayed there about a month, then I moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey. I took my parents with me.

College?

Fort Hays State in Kansas. But even then I was making my living as a writer. I've been a writer all my life.

Then came World War II.

I was a fighter pilot for four years. In fact, I still have my license, though I don't fly much anymore. Can't ski anymore, either. I'm thinking about getting a snowmobile for my house in upstate New York, though.

A snowmobile?

Yeah. I'll go slow, though. Any idea how many of books you've sold over the years?

(Shrugging) A couple of hundred million.

How many languages have you been translated into?

I'll tell you something. I'm the fifth most translated writer in history behind Lenin, Tolstoy, Gorky and Jules Verne. And they're all dead.

that you don't know the ending of until the last word of the last page. If you take away that word, you don't know the ending of the book.

Have you ever done that?

Twice. Once I don't remember anymore, but the other was the second book.

Vengeance is Mine, published in 1950.

Yeah. My publisher het me a thousand dollars I couldn't do it. So I wrote the book, but, when I sent it to him, I left off the last word. Mike Hammer couldn't shoot a woman. It was against his code. The climax of the book was Mike facing this woman who had a gun pointed at him, and the dilemma was whether or not he would shoot her. He did, but the last line of the book was the one that explained why it was okay for him to shoot the broad. When I sent it to the publisher, the last line was "June was a..." He called me in a panic "June was a what? June was a what?" I just laughed and said, "You owe me a thousand bucks." You know that line?

June was a man.

(Giggling.) That's right. June was a man.

Did he pay?

Oh, yeah.

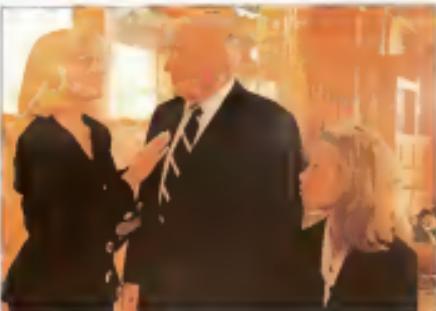
So tell me why you were in Muscatine, Iowa, doing a

Spillane's second wife, Sherry, looks quite sleekly on the dust jacket of his 1953 novel, "The Last Cop Out."



MICKEY SPILLANE

"I'm on all of them [i.e., the bestseller lists]. I'll tell you something. I'm the fifth most translated writer in history behind Lenin, Tolstoy, Gorky and Jules Verne. And they're all dead."



As a lawyer in MUMMY, Spillane offers counsel to Patty McCormack & Rachel Lumino. "The director is my friend. You do what you can to help your friends."

more (MOMMY).

This is kind of fun since it isn't really Hollywood. In Hollywood, there's too much pressure. Those people all feel pressure, I don't. Besides, Max (Collins) is my friend. You do what you can to help your friends.

Let's talk a little about Hollywood. I've heard you don't like it much.

(Shaking his head) I'm not a Hollywood hater, it's just not my cup of tea. Everybody I know out there is dead now. Except for business, I just don't have any use for it.

And you'll only do business with Jay [producer Jay Bernstein].

He's the only one I can trust.

Now there's a documentary being made about you, how do you feel about that?

It's not that big a deal to me. Max makes good movies and when he said he wanted to do one about me, I figured, What the heck?

Let's focus for a moment on the movies that have been made from your work.

They were terrible. All of them!

properly.

So you didn't like that movie either...

The movie was made at a minimum. We couldn't afford anything. That's why we filmed in London. I actually got us out of trouble over there by selling four of my books to British publishers, who'd been after them for a long time. That gave us enough money to pay the bills. It's ridiculous, these things that happen with Hollywood. They don't care about anybody. That's why I stay in books and won't work in TV or motion pictures unless Jay Bernstein's involved.

How do you feel then about the new Mike Hammer series?

It's fine. Jay Bernstein organized that, it's good.

And Jay's putting out quality product?

Yeah.

Since you don't seem very enamored of the movies, let me ask you this—which of the actors, who played Mike Hammer, is your personal favorite?

Stacy's (Keach) done the best job. Darren McGavin did a great job too, though when we were doing a half-hour black and white show in the '50s (1957-1959). He did kind of a tongue-in-cheek thing—more on the

Definitely the first four. The guy bought them because he wanted my name and the [Mike Hammer] character because he thought he could make a fast buck to do THE SILVER CHALICE ('54), the movie that he really wanted to make.

This was Victor Saville. Yeah.

You didn't like what he did with your material?

No, but I can't worry about that now. He's dead and that's done. It did teach me about how Hollywood works.

Is that why you ended up doing THE GIRL HUNTERS yourself?

No, I made that with my friend Bob Fellows. We got hung up again on that. Again, we got screwed up by Hollywood. They wanted to capitalize on my profits in the field. They started selling off pieces of the thing and ended up leasing us up again on the money. That's why we had to make it in black and white. This was just somebody trying to make money on something without making the product

Sherry Spillane also posed for "The Erection Set" cover (72) herbaceous on website on the hardcover edition.



humorous side—that went over fine in those years. Stacy's show is done in an hour. It's more dramatic because they've got more time. They're not stuck with that 22 minutes or whatever it is. You can get more storyline in. Now the techniques in TV has improved to such an extent that the fiction is done much better, more money goes into the plot. I think Stacy's about our last one though.

So Mickey Spillane's THE GIRL HUNTERS wouldn't be one of your favorite screen Mike Hammer?

(Laughing) No, no. That's not my job. I'm not an actor. I wouldn't think of being an actor.

What was it like to work with Shirley Eaton?

She was great. She was absolute fun. She and Lee Meredith, the doll in the Lite commercials?

Yeah.

They were both great actresses. They both gave the other person everything, they didn't try to steal scenes or anything. They were both very professional and a pleasure to work with.

You also appeared in a movie called *RING OF FEAR* (1954).

That was where I got my Hollywood thank you car?

Yeah, I did a rewrite on the script and John Wayne, he was producing the movie, gave me a 1956 Jaguar. I've still got it.

I've heard you thought a guy named Jack Stong would have been the perfect screen version of Mike Hammer:

Yeah, he'd dead now but he was perfect, right build, muscular, everything. He just couldn't act. People always tried to make Hammer something he wasn't. In *I, THE JURY* [the '53 version], the actor [Biff Elliott] was short, blonde and left-handed.

Well, how did you feel about the '82 version of *I, THE JURY*?

With Armand Assante?

BLOOD-RED KISSES!

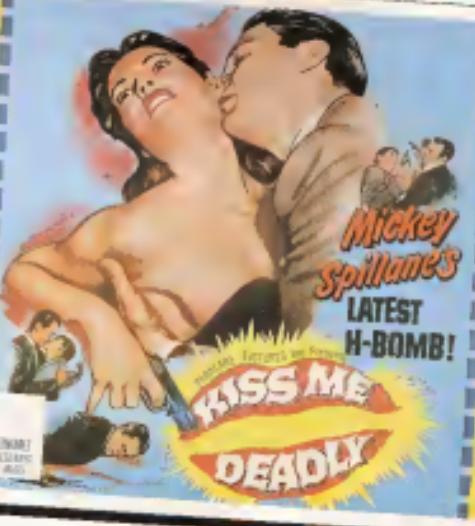


WHITE-HOT THRILLS!



RALPH MEKKER

As Mike Hammer
Directed by Robert
Herron
Screenplay by Robert
Herron
Music by Jerry Goldsmith
Cinematography by Harry Stradling, Jr.
Produced by Ralph Mekker
Associate producer: Robert L. Rosen
Cinematography by Harry Stradling, Jr.
Produced by Ralph Mekker
Associate producer: Robert L. Rosen



"KISS ME DEADLY is a true horror film," notes critic David

C. Holcomb. "Beneath its come-drama veneer beats the heart of a ruthless, thundershowerous beast." PULP FICTION paid homage to the film with a flash from its own great whodunit.

sante? Great actor but he was too short. You could see he was wearing three-inch heels when he was going up the stairs. (Chuckling) I looked tall when I played Mike Hammer because I hired all short actors.

For we done some other things besides writing and acting.

Oh, yeah. Deep-sea diver, stock car racer.

Not to mention fighter pi-

lot. In fact, I heard you were even fired out of a cannon.

(With a laugh) Yeah.

I heard you just got back your original manuscript of *I, The Jury*.

Yeah. A lady in California sent it to me after her husband died.

How did it feel to see it again?

It was amazing. I thought it was gone forever.

Since the last time we

talked, you've written another Mike Hammer novel.

Yeah, *Black Alley* (Dutton '96).

How does it feel to have a whole new generation of readers?

It's great, but they want to read new stuff. They don't want to read all that old stuff.

Can the world expect another Mike Hammer novel?

I have one halfway done now. It's the sequel to *Black Alley*. This may be the last Mike Hammer book. There comes a time when you don't want to spread your character out too much. You want him to go off on a high point.

When you were here in 1994, you told me you had two or three books to go. Then you told me the same thing again in 1996.

(Sly smiling.) Yeah. I did those.

So now what?

I've got two or three books to go.

Still?

Always. That's what I do. I write books.

Among all the actors cast as Mike Hammer, Stacy Keach is Spillane's personal favorite. Keach costarred as Hammer in a 1982 TV film, *MURDER ME, MURDER YOU* (Theresa Russell played Velma); he's now playing the role on the syndicated *MIKE HAMMER, PRIVATE EYE*.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black dress, is seated in a chair. She is holding a silver revolver in her right hand, pointing it downwards. Her left hand rests on her knee. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and appears to be a window with horizontal blinds.

"I admire the 'Splinter' dolls," says Adrienne Barbeau, who fronts the lingerie advertisement of the issue. "They are sexy, confident and tough. They're the equal of men in their shadowy world. They know what they want, and they have the brains to get it."

MICKEY SPILLANE THE DOLLS

SO ARE THEY SEXY OR SEXIST? PULCHRITUDE OR PREDATORS?
"DOLLS" DISCUSS THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO SPILLANE.

By MATTHEW V. CLEMENS

"Spillane Dolls": they're the dames, conceptualized by crime writer Mickey Spillane, who inhabit the toxic milieu of his irascible sleuth, Mike Hammer. It's a phylum that sustains the same societal notoriety, and same unparalleled popularity, as "The Bond Girls." Not unlike the actresses cast as Bond bombshells, the thespians hired to play Spillane's sirens either perished from the exposure or vanished quicker than a stool pigeon.

Clad only in a raincoat, Clerie Leachman made her movie debut in *KISS ME DEADLY* (1955) as a doll who flags down Hammer's car. The sleuth assumes that she escaped from a mental institution ("So you're a fugitive from the laughing house..."). Leachman's appearance is brief but memorable; she's promptly abducted by a couple of stooges and tortured to death with pliers (all too brusquely communicated via screaming and a cut to her bared, bushing gams). A couple of decades later, Leachman picked up a Golden Globe (Best TV Actress, Comedy: *PHYLIS*) and an Oscar (Best Supporting Actress/*LAST PICTURE SHOW*).

Gaby Rodgers, who extricates an atomic genie when she unlocks Pandora's Box,



KISS ME DEADLY: Marian Carr, frizzly as "Friday," makes Ralph Meeker ("Mike Hammer") tremble. P: Biff Elliott ("Hammer") & Peggie Castle in I, THE JURY (SD)

permanently disappeared within the fade-out scene's thermenunder cloud. She was never seen, on-screen again.

During the same decade, Spillane's dolls were embodied by a fleet of B-queens. Peggie Castle portrayed Venus in *THE LONG WAIT* (1954), adapted from Spillane's novel. One year later, cast as a senuous psychologist, she had a rendezvous



with Mike Hammer (Biff Elliott) in I, THE JURY. Making a string of low-budget sci-fi quickies, Castle's second most celebrated encounter was with a swarm of giant grasshoppers in BEGINNING OF THE END (1957). She passed away in 1973 (cirrhosis of the liver). Castle was only 46 years old.

Marian Carr, who played the amorous Friday in KISS

ME DEADLY, was a veteran of poverty row "shoot-'em-ups"; in her final film, she's stalked by The Butcher (Lon Chaney, Jr.), an executed criminal who's resurrected into **THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN** (56).

A few of the Spillane Dolls have crossed over to into playing Bond Girls. Tanya Roberts played Velda, Mike Hammer's secretary, in the made-for-TV flick, **MURDER ME, MURDER YOU** (1983). Two years later, cast as "Stacy Sutton," she took a hammock ride with 007 in **A VIEW TO KILL**. Barbara Carrera, as the founder of a sex clinic, was kissed n' killed by Hammer in an L. **THE JURY** remake (1982). Less than one year later, she was Fatima Bush — a hitch gone hallistic— who's kissed n' killed by 007 in **NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN**. Shirley Eaton's femmes fatales were also hardened with defused love lives introduced to Hammer in **THE GIRL HUNTERS**, she's later violently dis-



patched with a shotgun aimed right at her kissers. One year later, in **GOLD-FINGER** (64)—after a sexual dalliance with Sir James—Eaton turns into a soft-frenzied cadaver. A literal Golden Girl.

So how would one compare a Spillane Doll to a Bond Girl? "They're really quite different, aren't they?" grins Eaton. "Where the

SHIRLEY EATON

"Spillane Dolls and Bond Girls are quite different. Where the Bond movies are all tongue-in-cheek in terms of the violence and sex, Spillane's Mike Hammer films are much more serious."



2) Lindsay Bloom, a former B-queen (B-PACK ANNIE), as Velda in **MORE THAN MURDER**, a TV movie (83) that spawned a series, **MICKEY SPILLANE'S MIKE HAMMER**. Eaton reprised her role, aka Stacy Keach as Hammer (3). Li: Margaret Sheridan (THE THING) as Velda & Edie Ebbet as Hammer in L. **THE JURY**



Bond movies are all tongue-in-cheek, and over the top in terms of the violence and the sex, Mike Hammer is much more serious."

Over the years, "Velda" has developed from "second humans" (i.e., the secretary with a crush on her boss) to a distaff Mike Hammer. Pamela Duncan, a Roger Corman ingenue (**THE UNDEAD**, **ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS**), and Maxine Cooper—both of whom played Velda, respectively in **MY GUN IS QUICK** and **KISS ME DEADLY**—closely adhered to Spillane's physical description of the character: a curvy hemmette with a pageboy haircut. Velda subsequently metamorphosed into a leggy blonde. Check-out Laurren Landay (5,6), wonderful in L. **THE JURY** (82) and Pamela Anderson (4,5 & 5-1) in a 1994 TV movie, **COME DUE WITH ME**. Though other actresses have rendered Velda into the Spillane mode—sample Lindsay Bloom (**MICKEY SPILLANE'S MIKE HAMMER** television series, 1966-'67) and Cindy Pickett (**MARGIN FOR MURDER**, a 1981 TV movie)—Anderson shamed her heroine with an acerbic spunkiness. The latest incarnation of Velda is Shannen Doherty, formerly an appendage of the eroded erotic thrillers cinema, who plays the role in the syndicated **MIKE HAMMER, PRIVATE EYE** series.

Though previous adaptations of Spillane were hardly soft on sexuality, the '82 version of L. **THE JURY** was absolutely unrestrained. Notes critic James Kendrick, "It's one of several cinematic renditions of Spillane's books (including a '53 version of L. **THE JURY** made in 3-D). But this film differs from those earlier versions in one major way: it includes all of the sex and violence Spillane wrote about that could never be given screen treatment due to Hollywood's production code. Its constant equation of sex and violence, much of which is played with the intention of being erotic, is quite unsettling."

Indeed, the seductive striptease performed by Charlotte Manning, at the end of Spillane's book, comes much closer to fruition in the '82 adaptation than it ever could have in the 1963 production. The movie fades out with Ma Manning (Barbara Carrera), lying in a pool of her own blood, asking Hammer how he could have so nonchalantly shot her.

"It was easy," he retorts. End of movie.

Shirley Eaton, who sauntered through *THE GIRL HUNTERS* in a bikini, isn't fond of the liberties prompted by relaxed censorship. "I'm not a big fan of nudity in the cinema," she says. "I find it much more thrilling when something is left to the imagination. That's why you may see a shot of my back, or me naked behind a curtain in *GIRL HUNTERS*. But you never see everything. There's always something left to think about."

Eaton, currently working on her autobiography, reflects, "There are so many more challenges to being a woman in movies today. Even though what we were doing back then was very cheeky, the things that are being done now I find very uneasy. I wouldn't want to work in a situation where I was expected to reveal everything."

Addressing accusations that Spillane's work is sexist, Eaton recalls, "When I was making movies, if you were blonde with a good figure and bubbly, you were considered to be not very smart. Which is just not true. It was thought you couldn't have good looks, a good personality and brains, too. There's a segment of the audience that will only pay attention to how you look or how you move. It has nothing to do with your ability as an actor. Your ability is secondary. I'm sure that Mickey went through that sort of thing as well with his female characters."

Though her association with Mike Hammer is limited to guest spots on a couple of TV movies, voluptuous Lee Meredith is the quintes-



Red having or red-hot assassin? Shirley Eaton (21) in *THE GIRL HUNTERS* (1963). "It's not a big lie of nudity. I find it more exciting when something is left to your imagination. That's why you see a shot of me naked but behind a curtain."

ential "dell." During an 18-year tenure, Meredith and Spillane were inextricably linked in the public consciousness via a corpus of Miller Lite Beer commercials. "Mickey and I were just having fun," recounts Meredith. "It was a chance for him to make fun of himself and his character, he loved that. In that first commercial, Mickey is in the street, wearing that trademark trench coat and hat, when I slink up to him—naturally, they had me dressed in a sexy outfit. And I ask, 'Hey, Mick...you gotta light?' He says, 'Sure, dell,' and hands me a Lite Beer. That's how it all started."

Their union was almost indefinitely postponed. When approached to promote the soda, Meredith was working in the Broadway production of *The Sunshine Boys*. She wasn't even going to show up at the Miller Lite audition until someone tipped her off that she'd meet Spillane. "That intrigued me," Meredith remembers. "I knew who he was, and I really liked the idea that I'd get to meet Mickey Spillane. I had no idea what great friends we

were going to become."

Together they shot a series of commercials and made countless public appearances. Spillane, bedecked in trench coat and porkpie hat, and Meredith, squeezed into threads tailored to spill cleavage, performed routines at occasions as variant as bar openings and corporate dinners. "It was really hard work," relates Meredith. "We were on the road as many as 250 days a year. And I was always in these really tight, sexy outfits that made it al-

most impossible to breathe, let alone go to the bathroom. Then, once I got into the stall, people would be pushing pictures under the door for me to sign. It was all just nuts, but, through it all, Mickey was a gentleman and he always thought about me first."

Meredith's film credits include *THE PRODUCERS* and a film adaptation of *The Sunshine Boys*. By 1968, she landed a gig on the TV soap, *AS THE WORLD TURNS*. "I played Charmaine McColl, a great character," says Meredith. "She was a terrific, outrageous, funny, prime time kind of a character trapped in a daytime show. There were scenes where I would literally be doing a headstand while talking to one of the other characters. It was a fun job."

Though the soap stretched into a one-year engagement, Meredith and Spillane were still on the road pitching Miller Lite. So how does Meredith react to Spillane's branding in some quarters, as a sexist? "It's just not true," she protests. "Mickey is kind, courteous, a very outgoing, caring per-

sonalized on page 66



LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER

Less than two decades ago, female action figures were written-off as commercial liabilities. Toy franchises linked to the media—*BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*, *INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM*, even *ALIEN*—were bereft of a female presence. Plenty of good guys, bad guys, monsters and aliens. But no women. The times, however, they're a changin'. Two years ago, Lara Croft busted a male dominion: the PC-gamer market. Eidos Interactive, which debuted this "female Indiana Jones" on store shelves as the *Tomb Raider*, has sold six million units. The inevitable sequel to the adventure game, *Tomb Raider II*, is exceeding the sales of its predecessor. And the inevitable sequel to the inevitable sequel, *Tomb Raider III*, is in development for a November premiere.

"Lara Croft has cross-over appeal," says Eidos executive, Gary Keith. "The core audience, males in the 13-35 age bracket, love to see this beautiful, huxem woman running around. They prefer this eye candy to game heroes who are rendered into Arnold Schwarzeneggers. Women like Lara Croft because they perceive her as a role model: she's not only adventurous but very well-educated."

And legions of fans have bought into her history. Lara's biography initially appeared in *Tomb Raider's* introductory pamphlet. That dame with attitude, who's a product of British

A GLOBAL ICON, SHE BUSTED STEREOTYPES. BUT WILL CROFT DO NUDE SCENES?

BY DESIRE GONZALES



Lara Croft, heroine of Eidos' Tomb Raider game trilogy. Spin-offs currently in development include an animated series and a live-action Paramount Picture.

high society, survived a plane crash in the Himalayas. Realizing there was more to life than partying and bad marriages, she turned globetrotter. Her daddy, Lord Heavily Croft, didn't approve of his offspring's libertine spirit. Discontent with her research expeditions to ancient civilizations, Lord Croft disowned his daughter. But Lara hardly hangs

around in soup kitchens. When you're introduced to the curvy crusader in *Tomb Raider*, she's working out in an oak-paneled gymnasium located somewhere within her posh manor. Go figure.

Toby Gard later revealed Lara's deep, dark secrets to *The Face*, a British publication. Gard, a graphic artist, is a pretty good authority on Lara Croft; after all, he created the adventuress for

Core, the company that developed *Tomb Raider's* program and engine. Only 21 when he conceived the heroine, Gard admits that Croft's trademark chest was an accident: it seems her bosom abruptly inflated thanks to "a slip of the mouse. I wanted to expand them 50% and then—whoops!—150%. Darn."

Core concurs with Eidos' Gary Keith: to be succinct, a "third person perspective player" would likely prefer the option of interacting with a hot-looking babe instead of another unshaven, trigger-happy, lantern-jawed macho man. "When Lara is injured, you care," says Keith. "Beleaguered heroes in other games are just part of the body count." (In regard to Lara's physical femininity, I think they went overboard in *Tomb Raider II*; along with her considerable flotation devices, I noticed an awful lot of crotch-shot camera angles.)

Though there was some resistance to gender-bending *Tomb Raider* into a woman, Core was confident that Lara Croft's no-nonsense demeanor and bosomy persons would find an audience.

It's likely that those of you who lurk in the newsgroups (alt.games.tombraider) have already heard about a web site where you can operate a nude Lara Croft (no, I won't tell you where. Do your own search). "There was a time when we weren't quite sure about this ourselves!" says



Who will actually Lara Croft play in the movie? Fans were downright hostile when Anna Nicole Smith was rumored to have bagged the role. Eddie developed 'Red Lara,' another "comically, well-received female protagonist." Not their crowning achievement game: "They're at it again," says critic Vince Brody. "The sight of a Lara Croft-like character running around a dungeon had sexed, with a huge swish in tow, is enough to get anybody's attention. See: *Violence, 3D*, the quintessential formula for gaming in the late '90s."



"The core male audience prefer this beautiful, buxom lady over Schwarzenegger clones. Women admire Laura Croft because she's both, educated & adventurous."

Core's Susan Hamilton. "Two members of the original team left Core just after *Tomb Raider* was released so we weren't sure whether they had left this code in or not! Subsequent findings have proved that no such code ever existed. However, there are people out there who have made their own patches that simply change the textures on Lara to a flesh tone which makes her look as if she's nude. Sad but true!" So I hope this controversy is laid to rest. And, yeah, I admit it—I have the patch.

As for all the hype about model/actress Rhona Mitra exclusively embodying Lara Croft, guess again. Core actually hired three women for last year's Spring ECTS. Mitra monopolized the limelight as a result of her outspokenness. She later appeared on the front cover of Britain's popular men's' magazine, *FHM*. "The marketing strategy has now shifted more towards the digital character," says Hamilton. "This is partly because it would be impossible for a human to speak as Lara Croft and convey her true personality. Next year, we hope to create a 3D interactive Lara who can ask and answer questions and appear on TV, etc. This allows us full control over Lara's movements and personality!"

In regard to Mitra's oft-rumored "Lara Croft CD single," it's on the back burner. "However," says Hamilton, "a compilation CD, *A Tribute to Lara Croft*, will be released in Germany later this year. The CD includes re-mixed tracks by groups such as Apollo 440, Moxy and Depeche Mode. The

continued on page 98



URSULA BUCHFELLNER

NAKED SUPER-WITCH

SHE DEPOSED HERSELF AS EUROPE'S "EMPEROR OF EX-PLOITATION FILMS": IT ALL STARTED WITH A CENTERFOLD.

BY TED SHOEMAKER

She was a drive-in diva on the other side of the Atlantic, the European equivalent of Claudia Jennings, Cheryl "Rainbeaux" Smith and Candice Rialson. But German starlet Ursula (Urschi) Buchfellner is hardly reluctant to retire her severagasy as Germany's reigning B-Queen.



Buchfellner in the titillating, supernatural softcore saga, **THE NAKED SUPER-WITCHES OF THE RIO AMORE** ('80); she was "jumped" during production



Back in 1977, a 15-year-old Buchfellner was apprenticeshiped in a bakery. She was living with her divorced mother and nine brothers and sisters in a tiny, bathless apartment in Munich's working-class neighborhood of Hasenbergl. The toilet was one flight down, and, recalls Buchfellner, "When the heating failed in the winter, we slept five to a bed to keep warm."

A representative of Playboy's German contingent spotted the youthful

blonde in a beer garden. She recalls being informally attired jeans, T-shirt and leotards, no makeup, non-confined hairstyle. But the executive was impressed with the youthful blonde's slim, natural (38-23-33) presence. He described his Playboy affiliation but Buchfellner wasn't impressed. "I had never heard of that magazine before," recalls Buchfellner. Nevertheless, realizing she'd be recompensed and perhaps climb the social ladder, the in-

genuine agreed to pose for some trial photography. Admitting that she was somewhat ashamed to peel for the camera, Buchfellner was photographed during a tenure of two grueling days. The result: she became a Playmate of the Month in the magazine's German edition. Buchfellner was paid DM 4000, (approx. \$2000), a relative fortune—20 years ago—for a 15-year-old. Most of the money, unfortunately, was rationed to reimburse welfare agencies for her family's expenses. Buchfellner, however, took it on the chin: her celebrity was expanding. Before long, she crossed to America and was the youngest femme—not to mention the first German—to pose for a U.S. edition of Playboy (Oct. '79 centerfold).

Buchfellner was inundated with invitations to pose for German men's magazines. She spent a week in Kenya, striking nude poses in jungle locales for *Sexy* magazine. The working rapport was far from perfect. Buchfellner infuriated the photographer because she declined to sleep with him.

The saucy photos prompted the German adult industry to cast Buchfellner in softcore films. Not everyone perceived her fledgling popularity as a



MS. BUCHTELLNER

"The [producers] only wanted my body. The voice belonged to another actress. It was the last straw."

success story. One scribe compared Buchtellner to "a young girl being lured step-by-step into prostitution." Producers promised the starlet that she wouldn't be obligated to shoot scenes that's she'd gauge as distasteful, and, for a while, they were true to their word.

Buchtellner cut her teeth in the likes of HOT DOGS AUF IBIZA and POPCORN UND HINBREERIS (POPCORN AND ICE CREAM, 1978), inconsequential films which required her to do little more than stroll topless on a beach. But an incident during the filming of HOT DOGS prophetically telegraphed the abusive tactics to come. Though the film was purportedly shot on the posh Spanish island of Ibiza, it was actually produced on the much cheaper island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. The producers prevented Buchtellner's access to a return airline ticket; thus, contrary to contractual stipulations, she was stuck on the island during the the entire six weeks of

Li Buchtellner, snapped by Munich's Giuseppe Green. © As the VIRGIN AMONGST THE CANNIBALS debuting on U.S. video as MAN HUNTER, 11 minutes was trimmed from the American release.



M.S. BUCHFELLNER

"I didn't like playing a nymphomaniac: it's the exact opposite of what I am. I identified with the sweet wife."

shooting. The production personnel insisted that Buchfellner invest the surplus time in other projects. DIE NACKTE SUPERHEXEN VON RIO AMORE (THE NAKED SUPER WITCHES OF THE RIO AMORE, aka LINDA) offered a surfeit of eroticism and kink (the perpetual damsel-in-distress, a captive Buchfellner is tickled-tortured). During production, an actor decided to improvise: he "jumped" Buchfellner when she was chained in a cage. This wasn't in the script, which is hardly surprising—especially since films like SUPERHEXEN seldom have a script at all. Buchfellner screamed and struggled as the cameras rolled. The director didn't mind the impromptu molestation; he wanted everything "true to life."

Another low-budget film, SADOMANIA (1981), is still in demand at German video stores! Buchfellner, spirited to a female colony in Central America, is locked into clichés: the sadistic fe-

Ir: Buchfellner, photographed by Massimo Gatti. B: German poster for Buchfellner's movie debut, HOT DOGS AUF IBIZA (78). In her earliest films, she did little more than stroll topless on beaches.



male warden, the governor with an insatiable appetite for nymphets, the white slave trader.

Most of Buchfeller's early films were directed by Jess Franco, a Spaniard who, along with Luis Buñuel, was blacklisted by the Vatican newspaper, *L'Observatore Romano*, as one of two filmmakers whose influence was anathema to Christian doctrine (Buñuel pitched anarchy, Franco sold slime—rape, carnage, cannibalism, etc.). Buchfeller's devoutly Catholic mother and grandmother were hardly receptive to Buchfeller's career. Neighbors in Hasenbergl would sometimes call the struggling actress "Whore!" Buchfeller, a practicing Catholic, felt so guilty about her on-screen activity that she suffered insomnia. Equally humiliating was a string of perverse phone calls from very strange men. The German tabloids and adult magazines imperiled her personal character.

She was upset whenever her European product was Anglicized for English-speaking markets. "They only wanted my body," she sniffs. "The voice was some other actress." Buchfeller's heavy Bavarian accent precluded the starlet from dubbing her own movies. As a result, whenever dubbed, Buchfeller was often encouraged to scream obscenities and do orgasmic moans with unbridled hyperbole. "That was the last straw," she says.

Concluding her six-year-old sex film career, Buchfeller enrolled in acting class. During the next three years, she studied drama and became more fluent English, French and Italian. The training was financed with modeling jobs and money earned from past gigs. She subsequently landed a serious role—not a single frame of nudity—in a 1984 release, *TROTZKÖPFCHEIN*. The attitude of the tabloid press, which had cannonezed Buchfeller's skin flick shift, is perhaps a tribute to her mainstream success. *Edel Zeitung* magazine noted the blonde was "well behaved and upright in this latest picture..." The comment, believe it or not, was intended as stinging criticism. The language lessons earned her minor roles, including one—which wound-up on the cutting room floor—in the all-star, critically drubbed thriller, *BLOODLINE*. Again refusing to be a clothes dispenser, Buchfeller performed in television spots and conservatively modeled for print ads. Performing on the boards, she was cast in *Sextette* in Aachen and, in Munich, played Priscilla Presley in the stage musical, *Elois*. She has tallied some 40



As one of the NAKED SUPER WITCHES (l), a tormented Buchfeller (r) is tickle-tortured.

film and TV productions.

An attempt at a singing career sputtered, but Buchfeller recently wrote two songs that she's shopping around. One song's lyrics lament a young and gullible girl who becomes a Playmate of the Month, but still needs love; the other deals with a woman who grieves her lover's abandonment and caresses herself that they will meet again in Heaven. Buchfeller doesn't deny that both songs are auto-biographical.

Her professional reformation was highlighted with a couple of appearances on *DERRICK*, a detective series produced in Germany. During the show's '87 season, Buchfeller played the corpse of a once impassioned woman. Producer Helmut Ringelmann originally sought a beautiful model to portray the cadaver, but Buchfeller's acting experience

earned her not only a stint as the deceased seductress, but a flashback scene when the character was much more animate. Nevertheless, Buchfeller was discontent with the adherence to a nymphomaniac because "it's the exact opposite of what I am." The producers were impressed enough to furnish the actress, later that year, with a leading role on an episode as a sweet-tempered, abducted wife. "I can more easily identify with that," she smiles.

In retrospect, Buchfeller thought that performing in the buff on-screen, wouldn't be any more provocative than nude sunbathing, which is pretty routine in Germany. But she eventually noticed the public was only in lust with her.

Recently turning 35, Uschi Buchfeller has lost any pretense of naivete. There have been two men in her life. During the '80s she was linked with Rolf Eden, a Berlin playboy and nightclub owner who was 30 years her senior. Buchfeller's present companion is Tiziano Menghini, a Swiss architect who wants to marry her (she's thinking about it, but sounds doubtful). Through all this, Buchfeller remains close to Eden whom she still describes as "the best friend I ever had." Eleven years ago, the actress vowed she'd drop her career if only she could marry the right man and have two children. The dream still eludes her.

She gets together, twice a week, with poor kids from her home district of Hasenbergl. Their pastimes include swimming, sledding and storytelling. "People see me with the kids and think I'm already a mom," grins Buchfeller. "I like old people and children because they both need help." She's a frequent practitioner of positivity but refuses to be paid. Her patients are senior citizens, one of whom is 98. "They have lots of trouble with their foot infections, ingrown toenails."

Buchfeller refutes that all of the Good Samaritan work is some kind of contrition for her bad ol' days as a bombshell. Would she do anything differently if afforded the opportunity to do it all over again? "I was discovered by pure accident," she replies. "If I hadn't been, I'd now be married to an alcoholic, have two kids and be working like a dog in a bakery. I think not." □



FATALE ATTRACTIONS

continued from page 9

ball pops out of his hand and grows to the size of a beach ball," says Lovell. "The eyeball has the power of telekinesis. It wants to preen and bring the rest of its body into our world from its dimension. So the eyeball starts chasing me and these other women around, trying to molest us with this long tentacle that plays with our boobs and stuff, trying to get us all excited so it can mate. And the eyeball kills everyone who tries to stop it. It can also take over a person's body by going into their eye and becoming their eye, and then it feeds off their brain matter. It's hilariously funny." Directed by B-movie dove DeCoteau (*PUFFET MASTER III, NIGHTMARE SISTERS*), the film has been prepped for a direct-to-video Halloween release.

Elizabeth Gossom, (Miss America 1982), returns as Amanda, an immortal and "rogue femme fatale" in *HIGHLANDERS: THE RAVEN*. Duncan MacLeod (THE SERIES) has passed the sword to his on-again, off-again lover. During the intermission, Gossom (*DEATH OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK, STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*) has directed *THE DAMN DEAL*, a documentary about "three drag queens," for the Wilkes Entertainment Fund.

* Director/producer Kevin Summerfield (*GAME OF PLEASURE*) cast CARMELLA, his spin on Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 novel about a lesbian vampire. How closely will the film approximate Le Fanu's original work? "This is an extremely loose adaptation," says Summerfield. "I tried to retain the core elements of the original premise, but set it in a 1990s environment. It's about a woman named Laura, who goes into a small town searching for a sister she never knew she had, and who has recently died. The place is a ghost town now and there's no one around. Laura finds her sister's journal, and we find out who Carmella is." The role of Laura is played by N.Y. actress Stacia Crawford. (*CRYPTIC OR-*



Reprising her "Amanda" role in *HIGHLANDERS: THE RAVEN*, Elizabeth Gossom—Former Miss America linked to the Clinton sex scandal—with Paul Johnson ("MICK").

CHIO). Says Summerfield, "I'm really excited to have Stacia on board because of her strong, professional background and the fact she isn't your run-of-the-mill screen queen." □

SPILLANE: THE MYTH

continued from page 42

son. Note, "I meant the title to be *ceremonial*," smiles Collins, "but Mickey takes it very seriously."

Spillane and Collins have subsequently collaborated on a revival of *Mike Danger* ("According to legend," notes one source, "Spillane's 'Mike Hammer' was originally meant to be a comic book eye called 'Mike Danger.' After his comic attempts were rejected, Spillane decided to turn it into a novel."). Their alliance stretched to the film medium. Spillane, who played Mike Hammer in *THE GIRL HUNTERS* ('83), was directed by Collins in the aforementioned *MOMMY* and its sequel.

"Mickey's not just a writer but a true star," explains Collins. "He belongs on the Mount Rushmore of hard-boiled writers, right alongside Hammett, Chandler, and Ross McDonald. When I first met him, I told him my goal was to be my generation's Mickey Spillane. He just laughed and said, 'You can't be my generation's Mickey Spillane. I am.'" □

SPILLANE DOLLS

continued from page 42

son. If people think he's sexist, it's just because of the time during which he was raised. He was taught that women were to be treated with respect and taken care of. I don't see that as sexist."

Shirley Eaton summarizes: "Working with Mickey (cast as Mike Hammer in *THE GIRL HUNTERS*) was wonderful. I felt like I was working with an actor, even though he really isn't. I suppose it was partly because he'd created the Hammer

character. He just stepped right into the character and took off with it. He made it very easy to work. You see, at the same time we were filming *THE GIRL HUNTERS*, I was working on stage in *Coors Beer Here*. The hours were just giddy but Mickey always made it a pleasure to come to the set." □

LARA CROFT

continued from page 32

tracks have been re-used by the artists to include Lara Croft sound effects! The digital Lara appeared as a video guest for U2's *PopMart* tour in 1997, and also interacted with singer Bono.

FF staffer Laura Schiff's chronicled the proposed live action Lara Croft movie. "A film adaptation would be the next logical step for us to promote the *Tomb Raider* franchise," explains Susanna Hamilton. "However, it's something that we have to approach with caution. There was a possibility that we could've produced a computer-generated movie, like *TOY STORY*, but nothing has been confirmed yet. There are plenty of rumors circulating, all of which are unfounded!"

Care has capitalized on Lara Croft with a profusion of tie-ins. Sample her comic book alliance with *Witchblade* (FF 7-8, page 5) and a merchandising catalog (you can own Lara's bomber jacket and/or strap-on her watch and/or do the caffeine thing with a Croft coffee mug). Both sexes are plunking down cash for Tomb Raider memberships. "We don't have any figures for this, but, judging from the amount of e-mails we get, there are a larger number of female players out there than we expected," says Hamilton. "A lot of our female players identify with Lara's character." I know, for a fact, there's an academic professor/physics teacher in Spain who regularly dresses as Ms. Croft sans guna. Sure, Lara's big titie swells the guys, but her intelligence and chutzpa turns-on the girls.

Lara Croft, digital woman of the nineties. Every man's fantasy, and secretly, every woman's. And—did I mention?—she's accessible in toy stores as an action figure! □

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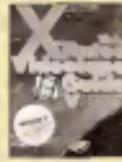
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LETTERS

DEE LICIOUS

I finally caught up with THE FRANCHISERS. My feelings are mixed, but Dee Wallace-Stone's performance blew away all of the film's expensive technology. And she's gorgeous! (forgive my lack of etiquette, but could you estimate her age?) Physically, Dee hasn't changed one bit since 1978's HILLS HAVE EYES? The horror/fantasy community owes her a debt cast in R.Y. THE HOWLING, INVISIBLE MOM, CRITTERS, et al. Dee doesn't indulge in Sharon Stone-like vanity; instead, she opts to unfailingly deliver creditable, even powerful performances. Dee makes the genre shine. (Why the bloody hell wasn't she Oscar-nominated for CUJO?) And if anyone is adventurous enough to lock Dee into the "mom-next-door" stereotype, check out her fierce female in Tobe Hooper's FM DAN-CRIBOLS TONIGHT!

I know that FF interviewed Dee back in '92 or '93. How about an update? Hollywood seems reluctant to praise this genuine talent; so how about the hamfats that Dee deserves?

Curtis Broderick
Toronto, Ontario

(Dee Wallace-Stone was born in 1948. The editor of FF, who rendezvoused with the actress earlier this year in Baltimore, describes her as "perpetually youthful. Unstombed by surgery, Ms. Stone looks like she's on the cusp of turning 29. Though a B-list actress, she's consistently underrated. It's bad enough that Stone's CUJO performance was slighted; some insiders are curious why she was denied an Emmy nomination for last year's TV movie, LOVE'S DEADLY TRIANGLE. Ms. Stone has, indeed, beautified the horror & fantasy cinemas with dignity." We're privileged to have endeavored her for an issue that will debut in early '99. Currently in CHRISTMAS PATE, Stone is concomitantly working furiously, see address, for right.)

NO BITZ?

I read a review in FF '74 which pertained to the release of VAMPIRE, a [1990] film written and directed by Bruce G.

Hallenbeck. Since the reviewer, LAUREN SCHIFF, seemed so confused as to the overall nature of the film, I thought I would take this opportunity to clear up a few points that were obviously missed or overlooked:

If the reviewer had carefully watched the film, she would have known that the young woman "running around in a silly vampire cape" was not the character of Marguerite, but rather the woman in the cape (Elizabeth Corinnes, as listed in the end credits) who symbolizes the evil which had descended upon the town.

The reviewer pointed out that the film was shot mostly in daytime and as such "doesn't foster a milieu befitting a vampire tale." Does this mean that the reviewer believes that "stereotypical" evil may only exist in the dark? Consider the scene in which the character, Cray (as a child), is chillingly stalked by his tiny sister at broad daylight. The incongruity of these elements adds a surreal note to the horror of the situation.

While Marguerite is indeed played by a much younger woman (Cathy Seeger); than in the original version, it serves to intensify the notion that evil is more abhorrent when the practitioner is not.

The pompous statement that the townspeople were replaced by "non-actors in quasi-vampire makeup" leads me to believe that the reviewer did not do any research in comparison of the two films. If she had done so, then the reviewer would have discovered that all the townspeople in the original 1931 release were not only non-actors but amateurs as well.

In closing, I suggest that if the reviewer/critic actually watched the film that she's set to review, then perhaps she would have a more complete and comprehensive piece for publication.

Rosa Inez Shaffer
Bensenville, NY

Lauren Schiff replies:
"I was absolutely right—I was completely confused as to the



Dee Wallace-Stone, who furnishes genuine high-profile performances, is photographed since 1988. See her feature article

was ever done in her likeness.

In fact, the *Bride*, *Bad*, *Tubetha* and *Cricket* kit characters were already being sold or sculpted before I, Mike James, had even met Danahab. Moreover, there exists no comic book for *Bride* or for *Cricket*.

The Azimuth website was also incorrectly printed. It is: www.jamesart.com

On page 7, two photographs were published, both copyrighted by Mike James. Permission was not required for their publication, nor were the photos credited. To avoid any misunderstanding, if Danahab provides your magazine with any photographs in the future, it would be prudent to determine whether they actually are photos copyrighted by Azimuth Design.

Mike James, owner
Azimuth Design PA

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